

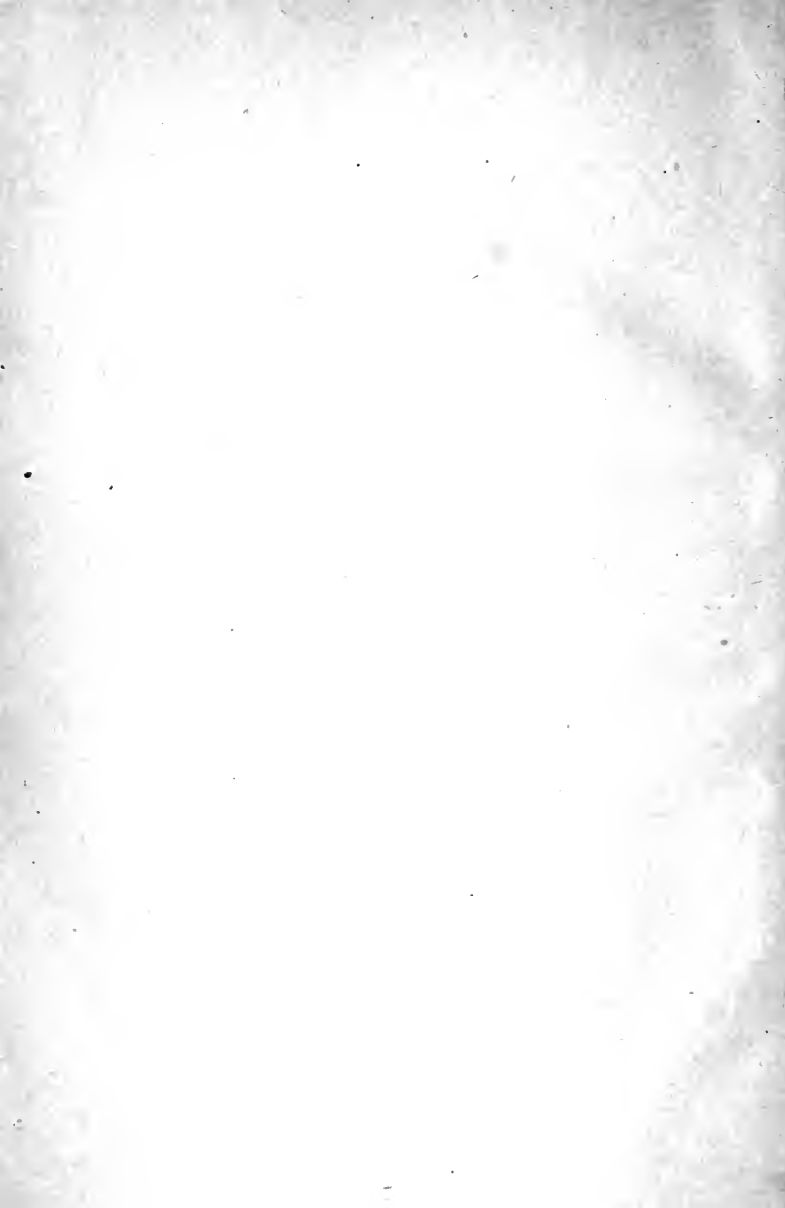
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Vaji shows Tom the door.

T O M B U R K E

OF "OURS"

BY

CHARLES LEVER

AUTHOR OF "CHARLES O'MALLEY"

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

VOL. I.

LONDON

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P R E F A C E.



I WAS led to write this story by two impulses: first, the fascination which the name and exploits of the Great Emperor had ever exercised on my mind as a boy, and secondly, by the favourable notice which the Press had bestowed upon my scenes of soldier-life in "Charles O'Malley."

If I had not in the wars of the Empire the patriotic spirit of a great national struggle to sustain me, I had a field far wider and grander than any afforded by our Peninsular campaigns; while in the character of the French army, composed as it was of elements derived from every rank and condition, there were picturesque effects one might have sought for in vain throughout the rest of Europe.

It was my fortune to have known personally some of those who filled great parts in this glorious drama. I had listened over and over to their descriptions of scenes, to which their look, and voice, and manner imparted a thrilling intensity of interest. I had opportunities of ques-

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Recd of J. J. Co. Coffin

tioning them for explanations, of asking for solutions of this and that difficulty which had puzzled me, till I grew so familiar with the great names of the time, the events, and even the localities, that when I addressed myself to my tale, it was with a mind filled by my topics to the utter exclusion of all other subjects

Neither before nor since have I ever enjoyed to the same extent the sense of being so entirely engrossed by a single theme. A great tableau of the Empire, from its gorgeous celebrations in Paris to its numerous achievements on the field of battle, was ever outspread before me, and I sat down rather to record than to invent the scenes of my story. A feeling that, as I treated of real events I was bound to maintain a degree of accuracy in relation to them, even in fiction, made me endeavour to possess myself with a correct knowledge of localities, and, so far as I was able, with a due estimate of those whose characters I discussed.

Some of the battle-fields I have gone over ; of others, I have learnt the particulars from witnesses of the great struggles that have made them famous. To the claim of this exactness I have, therefore, the pretension of at least the desire to be faithful. For my story, it has all the faults and shortcomings which beset everything I have ever written ; for these I can but offer regrets, only the more poignant that I feel how justly they are due.

The same accuracy which I claim for scenes and situations, I should like, if I dared, to claim for the individuals who figure in this tale; but I cannot, in any fairness, pretend to more than an attempt to paint resemblances of those whom I have myself admired in the description of others. Pioche and Minette are of this number. So is, but of a very different school, the character of Duchesne; for which, however, I had what almost amounted to an original. As to the episodes of this story, one or two were communicated as facts; the others are mere invention.

I do not remember any particulars to which I should further advert; while I feel, that the longer I dwell upon the theme, the more occasion is there to entreat indulgence — an indulgence which, if you are not weary of according, will be most gratefully accepted by

Your faithful Servant,

CHARLES LEVER.

Casa Capponi, Florence,
May, 1857.



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TOM BURKE OF "OURS."

CHAPTER I.

MYSELF.

IT was at the close of a cold, raw day in January—no matter for the year—that the Galway mail was seen to wind its slow course through that long and dull plain that skirts the Shannon, as you approach the "sweet town of Athlone." The reeking box-coats and dripping umbrellas that hung down on every side bespoke a day of heavy rain, while the splashed and mud-stained panels of the coach bore token of cut-up roads, which the jaded and toil-worn horses amply confirmed. If the outsiders, with hats pressed firmly down, and heads bent against the cutting wind, presented an aspect far from comfortable, those within, who peeped with difficulty through the dim glass, had little to charm the eye; their flannel nightcaps and red comforters were only to be seen at rare intervals, as they gazed on the dreary prospect, and then sank back into the coach, to con over their moody thoughts, or, if fortunate, perhaps to doze.

In the rumble, with the guard, sat one, whose burly figure and rosy cheeks seemed to feel no touch of the inclement wind that made his companions crouch. An oiled-silk foraging-cap, fastened beneath the chin, and a large mantle of blue cloth, bespoke him a soldier, if even the assured tone of his voice, and a certain easy carriage of his head, had not conveyed to the acute observer the same information.

Unsubdued in spirit, undepressed in mind, either by the long day of pouring rain or the melancholy outline of country on every side, his dark eye flashed as brightly from beneath the brim of his cap, and his ruddy face beamed as cheerily, as though Nature had put forth her every charm of weather and scenery to greet and delight him.

Now inquiring of the guard of the various persons whose property lay on either side, the name of some poor hamlet or some humble village, now humming to himself some stray verse of an old campaigning song, he passed his time, diversifying these amusements by a courteous salute to a gaping country girl, as, with unmeaning look, she stared at the passing coach. But his principal occupation seemed to consist in retaining one wing of his wide cloak around the figure of a little boy, who lay asleep beside him, and whose head jogged heavily against his arm with every motion of the coach.

"And so that's Athlone, yonder, you tell me," said the Captain, for such he was. "'The sweet town of Athlone, ochone!' Well, it might be worse. I've passed ten years in Africa—on the burning coast, as they call it: you never light a fire to cook your victuals, but only lay them before the sun for ten minutes, game something less, and the joint's done; all true, by Jove! Lie still, my young friend, or you'll heave us both over! And whereabouts does he live, guard?"

"Something like a mile and a half from here," replied the gruff guard.

"Poor little fellow, he's sleeping it out well. They certainly don't take overmuch care of him, or they'd never have sent him on the top of a coach, in weather like this, without even a greatcoat to cover him. I say, Tom, my lad, wake up, you're not far from home now. Are you dreaming of the plum-pudding, and the pony, and the big spaniel—eh?"

"Whisht!" said the guard, in a low whisper. "The chap's father is dying, and they've sent for him from school to see him."

A loud blast of the horn now awoke me thoroughly from the half-dreamy slumber in which I had listened to the previous dialogue, and I sat up and looked about me. Yes,

reader, my unworthy self it was who was then indulging in as pleasant a dream of home and holidays as ever blessed even a schoolboy's vigils. Though my eyes were open, it was some minutes before I could rally myself to understand where I was, and with what object. My senses were blunted by cold, and my drenched limbs were cramped and stiffened; for the worthy captain, to whose humanity I owed the share of his cloak, had only joined the coach late in the day, and during the whole morning I had been exposed to the most pitiless downpour of rain and sleet.

"Here you are!" said the rough guard, as the coach drew up to let me down. "No need of blowing the horn here, I suppose."

This was said in allusion to the miserable appearance of the ruined cabin that figured as my father's gate-lodge, where some naked children were seen standing before the door, looking with astonishment at the coach and passengers.

"Well, good-bye, my little man. I hope you'll find the governor better. Give him my respects; and, hark ye, if ever you come over to Athlone don't forget to come and see me—Captain Bubbleton—George Frederick Augustus Bubbleton, 45th Regiment, or, when at home, Little Bubbleton, Herts, and Bungalow Hut, in the Carnatic; that's the mark; so good-bye—good-bye."

I waved my hand to him in adieu, and then turned to enter the gate.

"Well, Freney," said I, to a half-dressed, wild-looking figure that rushed out to lift the gate open, for the hinges had been long broken, and it was attached to the pier by some yards of strong rope, "how is my father?"

A gloomy nod and a discouraging sign with his open hand were the only reply.

"Is there any hope?" said I, faintly.

"Sorrow one of me knows. I daren't go near the house. I was served with notice to quit a month ago, and they tell him I'm gone. Oh, vo, vo! what's to become of us all!"

I threw the bag, which contained my humble wardrobe, on my shoulder, and, without waiting for further questioning, walked forward. Night was falling fast, and nothing

short of my intimacy with the place from infancy could have enabled me to find my way. The avenue, from long neglect and disuse, was completely obliterated; the fences were broken up to burn; the young trees had mostly shared the same fate; the cattle strayed at will through the plantations, and all bespoke utter ruin and destruction.

If the scene around me was sad, it only the better suited my own heart. I was returning to a home where I had never heard the voice of kindness or affection; where one fond word—one look of welcome had never met me. I was returning, not to receive the last blessing of a loving parent, but merely sent for as a necessary ceremony on the occasion. And perhaps there was a mock propriety in inviting me once more to the house which I was never to revisit. My father—a widower for many years—had bestowed all his affection on my elder brother, to whom so much of his property as had escaped the general wreck was to descend. He had been sent to Eton under the guidance of a private tutor, while an obscure Dublin school was deemed good enough for me. For him every nerve was strained to supply all his boyish extravagance, and enable him to compete with the sons of men of high rank and fortune, whose names, mentioned in his letters home, were an ample recompense for all the lavish expenditure their intimacy entailed. My letters were few and brief, their unvaried theme the delay in the last quarter's payment, or the unfurnished condition of my little trunk, which more than once exposed me to the taunts of my schoolfellows.

He was a fair and delicate boy, timid in manner, and retiring in disposition; I, a browned-faced varlet, who knew every one from the herd to the high-sheriff. To him the servants were directed to look up as the head of the house, while I was consigned either to total neglect, or the attentions of those who only figured as supernumeraries in our army list.

Yet, with all these sources of jealousy between us, we loved each other tenderly. George pitied "poor Tommy," as he called me; and for that very pity my heart clang to him. He would often undertake to plead my cause for those bolder infractions his gentle nature never ventured on, and it was only from long association with boys

of superior rank, whose habits and opinions he believed to be standards for his imitation, that at length a feeling of estrangement grew up between us, and we learned to look somewhat coldly on each other.

From these brief details it will not be wondered at if I turned homeward with a heavy heart. From the hour I received the letter of my recall—which was written by my father's attorney in most concise and legal phrase—I had scarcely ceased to shed tears; for, so it is, there is something in the very thought of being left an orphan, friendless and unprotected, quite distinct from the loss of affection and kindness which overwhelms the young heart with a very flood of wretchedness. Besides, a stray word or two of kindness had now and then escaped my father towards me, and I treasured these up as my richest possession. I thought of them over and over. Many a lonely night, when my heart has been low and sinking, I repeated them to myself, like talismans against grief; and when I slept, my dreams would dwell on them, and make my waking happy.

As I issued from a dark copse of beech-trees the indistinct outline of the old house met my eye. I could trace the high-pitched roof, the tall and pointed gables against the sky, and with a strange sense of undefinable fear, beheld a solitary light that twinkled from the window of an upper room, where my father lay; the remainder of the building was in deep shadow.

I mounted the long flight of stone steps that led to what once had been a terrace; but the balustrades were broken many a year ago, and even the heavy granite stone had been smashed in several places. The hall-door lay wide open, and the hall itself had no other light save such as the flickering of a wood fire afforded, as its uncertain flashes fell upon the dark wainscot and the floor.

I had just recognized the grim, old-fashioned portraits that covered the walls, when my eye was attracted by a figure near the fire. I approached, and beheld an old man doubled with age; his bleared eyes were bent upon the wood embers, which he was trying to rake together with a stick. His clothes bespoke the most miserable poverty, and afforded no protection against the cold and cutting blast. He was crooning some old song to himself as I

drew near, and paid no attention to me. I moved round so as to let the light fall on his face, and then perceived it was old Lanty, as he was called. Poor fellow! Age and neglect had changed him sadly since I had seen him last. He had been the huntsman of the family for two generations, but having somehow displeased my father one day at the cover, he rode at him and struck him on the head with his loaded whip. The man fell senseless from his horse, and was carried home. A few days, however, enabled him to rally and be about again, but his senses had left him for ever. All recollection of the unlucky circumstance had faded from his mind, and his rambling thoughts dwelt on his old pursuits, so that he passed his days about the stables, looking after the horses and giving directions about them. Latterly he had become too infirm for this, and never left his own cabin; but now, from some strange cause, he had come up to "the house," and was sitting by the fire as I found him.

They who know Ireland will acknowledge the strange impulse which, at the approach of death, seems to excite the people to congregate about the house of mourning. The passion for deep and powerful excitement—the most remarkable feature in their complex nature—seems to revel in the details of sorrow and suffering. Not content even with the tragedy before them, they call in the aid of superstition to heighten the awfulness of the scene; and every story of ghost and banshee is conned over in tones that need not the occasion to make them thrill upon the heart. At such a time, the deepest workings of their wild spirits are revealed. Their grief is low and sorrow-struck, or it is loud and passionate; now breaking into some plaintive wail over the virtues of the departed, now bursting into a frenzied appeal to the Father of Mercies as to the justice of recalling those from earth who were its blessing; while, stranger than all, a dash of reckless merriment will break in upon the gloom, but it is like the red lightning through the storm, that, as it rends the cloud, only displays the havoc and desolation around, and at its parting leaves even a blacker darkness behind it.

From my infancy I had been familiar with scenes of this kind, and my habit of stealing away unobserved from home to witness a country wake had endeared me much

to the country people, who felt this no small kindness from "the master's son." Somehow, the ready welcome and attention I always met with had worked on my young heart, and I learned to feel all the interest of these scenes fully as much as those about me. It was, then, with a sense of desolation that I looked upon the one solitary mourner who now sat at the hearth—that poor old idiot man who gazed on vacancy, or muttered with parched lip some few words to himself. That he alone should be found to join his sorrows to ours, seemed to me like utter destitution, and as I leaned against the chimney I burst into tears.

"Don't cry, alannah, don't cry." said the old man; "it's the worst way at all. Get up again and ride him at it bould. Oh, vo, look at where the thief is taking now—along the stone wall there!" Here he broke out into a low, wailing ditty:—

"And the fox set him down and looked about,
 And many were feared to follow.
 'Maybe I'm wrong,' says he, 'but I doubt
 That you'll be as gay to-morrow.
 For loud as you cry, and high as you ride,
 And little you feel my sorrow,
 I'll be free on the mountain side,
 While you'll lie low to-morrow.
 Oh, Moddideroo, aroo, aroo.'

Ay, just so—they'll run to earth in the cold churchyard. Whisht—hark there—soho, soho—that's Badger I hear!"

I turned away with a bursting heart, and felt my way up the broad oak-stair, which was left in complete darkness. As I reached the corridor, off which the bedrooms lay, I heard voices talking together in a low tone—they came from my father's room, the door of which lay ajar. I approached noiselessly and peeped in: by the fire, which was the only light now in the apartment, sat two persons at a small table, one of whom I at once recognized as the tall, solemn-looking figure of Doctor Finnerty; the other I detected by the sharp tones of his voice to be Mr. Anthony Basset, my father's confidential attorney.

On the table before them lay a mass of papers, parch-

ments, leases, deeds, together with glasses and a black bottle, whose accompaniments of hot water and sugar left no doubt as to its contents. The chimney-piece was crowded with a range of vials and medicine bottles, some of them empty, some of them half finished. From the bed in the corner of the room came the heavy sound of snoring respiration, which either betokened deep sleep or insensibility. If I enjoyed but little favour in my father's house, I owed much of the coldness shown to me to the evil influence of the very two persons who sat before me in conclave. Of the precise source of the doctor's dislike I was not quite clear, except, perhaps, that I recovered from the measles when he predicted my certain death; the attorney's was, however, no mystery. About three years before he had stopped to breakfast at our house on his way to Ballinasloe fair. As his pony was led round to the stable it caught my eye. It was a most tempting bit of horseflesh, full of spirit and in top condition, for he was going to sell it. I followed him round, and appeared just as the servant was about to unsaddle him. The attorney was no favourite in the house, and I had little difficulty in persuading the man, instead of taking off the saddle, merely to shorten the stirrups to the utmost limit. The next minute I was on his back flying over the lawn at a stretching gallop. Fences abounded on all sides, and I rushed him at double ditches, stone walls, and bog-wood rails, with a mad delight that at every leap rose higher. After about three-quarters of an hour thus passed, his blood, as well as my own, being by this time thoroughly roused, I determined to try him at the wall of an old pound, which stood some few hundred yards from the front of the house. Its exposure to the window, at any other time, would have deterred me from even the thought of such an exploit, but now I was quite beyond the pale of such cold calculations; besides that I was accompanied by a select party of all the labourers, with their wives and children, whose praises of my horsemanship would have made me take the lock of a canal if before me. A fine gallop of grass sward led to the pound, and over this I went, cheered with as merry a cry as ever stirred a light heart. One glance I threw at the house as I drew near the leap; the window of the breakfast parlour was open,

my father and Mr. Basset were both at it; I saw their faces red with passion, I heard their loud shout; my very spirit sickened within me—I saw no more—I felt the pony rush at the wall—the quick stroke of his feet—the rise—the plunge—and then a crash—and I was sent spinning over his head some half-dozen yards, ploughing up the ground on face and hands. I was carried home with a broken head; the pony's knees were in the same condition. My father said that he ought to be shot for humanity's sake; Tony suggested the same treatment for me, on similar grounds. The upshot, however, was, I secured an enemy for life, and, worse still, one whose power to injure was equalled by his inclination.

Into the company of these two worthies I now found myself thus accidentally thrown, and would gladly have retreated at once, but that some indescribable impulse to be near my father's sick-bed was on me, and so I crept stealthily in and sat down in a large chair at the foot of the bed, where unnoticed I listened to the long-drawn heavings of his chest, and in silence wept over my own desolate condition.

For a long time the absorbing nature of my own grief prevented me hearing the muttered conversation near the fire; but at length, as the night wore on, and my sorrow had found vent in tears, I began to listen to the dialogue beside me.

“He'll have five hundred pounds under his grandfather's will, in spite of us; but what's that?” said the attorney.

“I'll take him as an apprentice for it, I know,” said the doctor, with a grin that made me shudder.

“That's settled already,” replied Mr. Basset. “He's to be articed to me for five years; but I think it's likely he'll go to sea before the time expires. How heavily the old man is sleeping! Now, is that natural sleep?”

“No; that's always a bad sign; that puffing with the lips is generally among the last symptoms. Well, he'll be a loss anyhow, when he's gone. There's an eight-ounce mixture he never tasted yet—infusion of gentian with soda. Put your lips to that.”

“Devil a one o' me will ever sup the like,” said the attorney, finishing his tumbler of punch as he spoke. “Pheugh! how can you drink them things that way?”

"Sure it's the compound infusion, made with orange peel and cardamom seeds. There isn't one of them didn't cost two-and-ninence. He'll be eight weeks in bed come Tuesday next."

"Well, well! If he lived till the next assizes, it would be telling me four hundred pounds, not to speak of the costs of the ejectments I have in hand against Mullins and his father-in-law."

"It's a wonder," said the doctor, after a pause, "that Tom didn't come by the coach. It's no matter now, at any rate; for, since the eldest son's away, there's no one here to interfere with us."

"It was a masterly stroke of yours, doctor, to tell the old man the weather was too severe to bring George over from Eton. As sure as he came he'd make up matters with Tom, and the end of it would be, I'd lose the agency, and you wouldn't have those pleasant little bills for the tenantry—eh, Fin?"

"Whisht! he's waking now. Well, sir—well, Mr. Burke, how do you feel now? He's off again."

"The funeral ought to be on a Sunday," said Basset, in a whisper. "There'll be no getting the people to come any other day. He's saying something, I think."

"Fin," said my father, in a faint, hoarse voice—"Fin, give me a drink. It's not warm."

"Yes, sir, I had it on the fire."

"Well, then, it's myself that's growing cold. How's the pulse now, Fin? Is the Dublin doctor come yet?"

"No, sir; we're expecting him every minute; but sure, you know, we're doing everything."

"Oh! I know it. Yes, to be sure, Fin; but they've many a new thing up in Dublin, there, we don't hear of. Whisht! what's that?"

"It's Tony, sir—Tony Basset; he's sitting up with me."

"Come over here, Tony. Tony, I'm going fast. I feel it, and my heart is low. Could we withdraw the proceedings about Freney?"

"He's the biggest blackguard——"

"Ah! no matter now—I'm going to a place where we'll all need mercy. What was it that Canealy said he'd give for the land?"

“Two pound ten an acre—and Freney never paid thirty shillings out of it.”

“It’s mighty odd George didn’t come over.”

“Sure, I told you there was two feet of snow on the ground.”

“Lord be about us! what a severe season! But why isn’t Tom here?” I started at the words, and was about to rush forward, when he added, “I don’t want him, though.”

“Of course you don’t,” said the attorney. “It’s little comfort he ever gave you. Are you in pain there?”

“Ay, great pain over my heart. Well, well! don’t be hard to him when I’m gone.”

“Don’t let him talk so much,” said Basset, in a whisper, to the doctor.

“You must compose yourself, Mr. Burke,” said the doctor. “Try and take a sleep. The night isn’t half through yet.”

The sick man obeyed without a word, and soon after the heavy respiration betokened the same lethargic slumber once more.

The voices of the speakers gradually fell into a low, monotonous sound; the long-drawn breathings from the sick-bed mingled with them; the fire only sent forth an occasional gleam, as some piece of falling turf seemed to revive its wasting life, and shot up a myriad of bright sparks; and the chirping of the cricket in the chimney-corner sounded to my mournful heart like the tick of the death-watch.

As I listened my tears fell fast, and a gulping fulness in my throat made me feel like one in suffocation. But deep sorrow, somehow, tends to sleep. The weariness of the long day and dreary night, exhaustion, the dull hum of the subdued voices, and the faint light, all combined to make me drowsy, and I fell into a heavy slumber.

I am writing now of the far-off past—of the long years ago, of my youth—since which my seared heart has had many a sore and scalding lesson; yet I cannot think of that night, fixed and graven as it lies in my memory, without a touch of boyish softness. I remember every waking thought that crossed my mind—my very dream is still before me. It was of my mother. I thought of

her as she lay on a sofa in the old drawing-room, the window open, and the blinds drawn; the gentle breeze of a June morning flapping them lazily to and fro, as I knelt beside her to repeat my little hymn, the first I ever learned; and how at each moment my eyes would turn and my thoughts stray to that open casement, through which the odour of flowers and the sweet song of birds were pouring; and my little heart was panting for liberty, while her gentle smile and faint words bade me remember where I was. And then I was straying away through the old garden, where the very sunlight fell scantily through the thick-woven branches, loaded with perfumed blossom; the blackbirds hopped fearlessly from twig to twig, mingling their clear notes with the breezy murmur of the leaves, and the deep hum of summer bees. How happy was I then! And why cannot such happiness be lasting? Why can we not shelter ourselves from the base contamination of worldly cares, and live on amid pleasures pure as these, with hearts as holy and desires as simple as in childhood?

Suddenly a change came over my dream, and the dark clouds began to gather from all quarters, and a low, creeping wind moaned heavily along. I thought I heard my name called. I started and awoke. For a second or two the delusion was so strong that I could not remember where I was; but as the grey light of a breaking morning fell through the half-open shutters, I beheld the two figures near the fire. They were both sound asleep, the deep-drawn breathing and nodding heads attesting the heaviness of their slumber.

I felt cold and cramped, but still afraid to stir, although a longing to approach the bedside was still upon me. A faint sigh and some muttered words here came to my ear, and I listened. It was my father; but so indistinct the sounds, they seemed more like the ramblings of a dream. I crept noiselessly on tiptoe to the bed, and, drawing the curtain gently over, gazed within. He was lying on his back, his hands and arms outside the clothes. His beard had grown so much, and he had wasted so far, that I could scarcely have known him. His eyes were wide open, but fixed on the top of the bed; his lips moved rapidly, and, by his hands, as they were closely clasped,

I thought it was in prayer. I leaned over him, and placed my hand in his. For some time he did not seem to notice it, but at last he pressed it softly, and, rubbing the fingers to and fro, he said, in a low, faint voice, "Is this your hand, my boy?"

I thought my heart had split, as, in a gush of tears, I bent down and kissed him.

"I can't see well, my dear; there's something between me and the light, and a weight is on me—here—here——"

A heavy sigh, and a shudder that shook his whole frame, followed these words.

"They told me I wasn't to see you once again," said he, as a sickly smile played over his mouth; "but I knew you'd come to sit by me. It's a lonely thing not to have one's own at such an hour as this. Don't weep, my dear—my own heart's failing me fast."

A broken, muttering sound followed, and then he said, in a loud voice,—

"I never did it! It was Tony Basset. He told me—he persuaded me. Ah! that was a sore day when I listened to him. Who's to tell me I'm not to be master of my own estate? Turn them adrift—ay, every man of them. I'll weed the ground of such wretches—eh, Tony? Did any one say Freney's mother was dead?—they may wake her at the cross roads, if they like. Poor old Molly! I'm sorry for her, too. She nursed me and my sister that's gone; and maybe her death-bed, poor as she was, was easier than mine will be—without kith or kin, child or friend. Oh, George!—and I that doted on you with all my heart! Who's hand's this?—ah, I forgot, my darling boy, it's you. Come to me here, my child. Wasn't it for you that I toiled and scraped this many a year? Wasn't it for you that I did all this, and—O God, forgive me!—maybe it's my soul that I've perilled to leave you a rich man. Where's Tom?—where's that fellow now?"

"Here, sir," said I, squeezing his hand, and pressing it to my lips.

He sprang up at the words, and sat up in his bed, his eyes dilated to their widest, and his pale lips parted asunder.

"Where?" cried he, as he felt me over with his thin fingers, and drew me towards him.

"Here, father, here."

"And is this Tom?" said he, as his voice fell into a low, hollow sound, and then added, "Where's George?—answer me at once. Oh, I see it. He isn't here; he wouldn't come over to see his old father. Tony! Tony Basset, I say!" shouted the sick man, in a voice that roused the sleepers, and brought them to his bedside, "open that window there. Let me look out—do it as I bid you—open it wide. Turn in all the cattle you can find on the road. Do you hear me, Tony? Drive them in from every side. Finnerty, I say, mind my words, for"—(here he uttered a most awful and terrific oath)—"as I linger on this side of the grave, I'll not leave him a blade of grass I can take from him."

His chest heaved with a convulsive spasm, his face became pale as death, his eyes fixed; he clutched eagerly at the bed-clothes, and then, with a horrible cry, he fell back upon the pillow, as a faint stream of red blood trickled from his nostril and ran down his chin.

"It's all over now," whispered the doctor.

"Is he dead?" said Basset.

The other made no reply; but, drawing the curtains close, he turned away, and they both moved noiselessly from the room.



CHAPTER II.

DARBY—THE "BLAST."

IF there are dreams which, by their vividness and accuracy of detail, seem altogether like reality, so are there certain actual passages in our lives which, in their indistinctness while occurring, and in the faint impression they leave behind them, seem only as mere dreams. Most of our early sorrows are of this kind. The warm current of our young hearts would appear to repel the cold touch of affliction; nor can grief, at this period, do more than breathe an icy chill upon the surface of our affections, where all is glowing and fervid beneath. The struggle, then, between the bounding heart and the depressing care, renders our impressions of grief vague and ill-defined.

A stunning sense of some great calamity, some sorrow without hope, mingled in my waking thoughts with a childish notion of freedom. Unloved, uncared for, my early years presented but few pleasures. My boyhood had been a long struggle to win some mark of affection from one who cared not for me, and to whom still my heart had clung, as does the drowning man to the last plank of all the wreck. The tie that bound me to him was now severed, and I was without one in the wide world to look up to or to love.

I looked out from my window upon the bleak country. A heavy snow-storm had fallen during the night. A lowering sky of leaden hue stretched above the dreary landscape, across which no living thing was seen to move. Within-doors all was silent. The doctor and the attorney had both taken their departure: the deep wheel-track in the snow marked the road they had followed. The servants, seated around the kitchen fire, conversed in low and broken whispers. The only sound that broke the stillness was the ticking of the clock upon

the stair. There was something that smote heavily on my heart in the monotonous ticking of that clock; that told of time passing beside him who had gone; that seemed to speak of minutes close to one whose minutes were eternity. I crept into the room where the dead body lay, and, as my tears ran fast, I bent over it. I thought sometimes the expression of those cold features changed—now frowning heavily, now smiling blandly on me. I watched them till, in my eager gaze, the lips seemed to move, and the cheek to flush. How hard is it to believe in death!—how difficult to think that "there is a sleep that knows no waking." I knelt down beside the bed and prayed. I prayed that now, as all of earth was nought to him who was departed, he would give me the affection he had not bestowed in life. I besought him not to chill the heart that in its lonely desolation had neither home nor friend. My throat sobbed to bursting as in my words I seemed to realize the fulness of my affliction. The door opened behind me as with bent-down head I knelt. A heavy footstep slowly moved along the floor, and the next moment the tottering figure of old Lanty stood beside me, gazing on the dead man. There was that look of vacancy in his filmy eye that showed he knew nothing of what had happened.

"Is he asleep, Master Tommy?" said the old man, in a faint whisper.

My lips trembled, but I could not speak the word.

"I thought he wanted the 'dogs' up at Meelif; but I'm strained here about the loins, and can't go out myself. Tell him that, when he wakes."

"He'll never wake now, Lanty—he's dead," said I, as a rush of tears half choked my utterance.

"Dead!" said he, repeating the word two or three times—"dead! Well, well, I wonder will Master George keep the dogs now. There seldom comes a better; and 'twas himself that liked the cry o' them."

He tottered from the room as he spoke, and I could hear him muttering the same words over and over, as he crept slowly down the stair.

I have said that this painful stroke of fortune was as a dream to me, and so for three days I felt it. The altered circumstances of everything about me were inexplicable

to my puzzled brain. The very kindness of the servants—so unusual to me—struck me forcibly. They felt that the time was past when any sympathy for me had been the passport to disfavour, and they pitied me.

The funeral took place on the third morning. Mr. Basset having acquainted my brother that there was no necessity for his presence, even that consolation was denied me, to meet him who alone remained of all my name and house belonging to me. How I remember every detail of that morning! The silence of the long night broken in upon by heavy footsteps ascending the stairs—strange voices, not subdued like those of all in our little household, but loud and coarse—even laughter I could hear—the noise increasing at each moment. Then the muffled sound of wheels upon the snow, and the cries of the drivers as they urged their horses forward. Then a long interval, in which nought was heard save the happy whistle of some poor postilion, who, careless of his errand, wiled away the tedious time with a lively tune. And, lastly, there came the dull noise of feet moving step by step down the stair, the muttered words, the shuffling sound of feet as they descended, and the clank of the coffin as it struck against the wall.

The long, low parlour was filled with people, few of whom I had ever seen before. They were broken up into little knots, chatting cheerfully together, while they made a hurried breakfast. The table and sideboard were covered with a profusion I had never witnessed previously. Decanters of wine passed freely from hand to hand; and although the voices fell somewhat as I appeared amidst them, I looked in vain for one touch of sorrow for the dead, or even respect for his memory.

As I took my place in the carriage beside the attorney, a kind of dreamy apathy settled down on me, and I scarcely knew what was passing. I only remember the horrible shrinking sense of dread with which I recoiled from his one attempt at consolation, and the abrupt way in which he desisted, and turned to converse with the doctor. How my heart sickened as we drew near the churchyard, and I beheld the open gate that stood wide awaiting us. The dusky figures, with their mournful black cloaks, moved slowly across the snow, like spirits of some gloomy world;

while the death-bell echoed in my ears, and sent a shuddering through my frame.

* * * * *

"What is to become of the second boy?" said the clergyman, in a low whisper, but which, by some strange fatality, struck forcibly on my ear.

"It's not much matter," replied Basset, still lower; "for the present he goes home with me. Tom, I say, you come back with me to-day."

"No," said I, boldly, "I'll go home again."

"Home!" repeated he, with a scornful laugh—"home! And where may that be, youngster?"

"For shame, Basset!" said the clergyman, "don't speak that way to him. My little man, you can't go home to-day. Mr. Basset will take you with him for a few days, until your late father's will is known, and his wishes respecting you."

"I'll go home, sir," said I, but in a fainter tone, and with tears in my eyes.

"Well, well, let him do so for to-day; it may relieve his poor heart. Come, Basset, I'll take him back myself."

I clasped his hand as he spoke, and kissed it over and over.

"With all my heart," cried Basset, "I'll come over and fetch him to-morrow;" and then he added, in a lower tone, "and before that you'll have found out quite enough to be heartily sick of your charge."

All the worthy vicar's efforts to rouse me from my stupor or interest me failed. He brought me to his house, where, amid his own happy children, he deemed my heart would have yielded to the sympathy of my own age; but I pined to get back: I longed—why, I knew not—to be in my own little chamber, alone with my grief. In vain he tried every consolation his kind heart and his life's experience had taught him; the very happiness I witnessed but reminded me of my own state, and I pressed the more eagerly to return.

It was late when he drew up to the door of the house, to which already the closed window-shutters had given a look of gloom and desertion. We knocked several times before any one came, and at length two or three heads

appeared at an upper window, in half-terror at the unlooked-for summons for admission.

"Good-bye, my dear boy," said the vicar, as he kissed me; "don't forget what I have been telling you. It will make you bear your present sorrow better, and teach you to be happier when it is over."

"Come down to the kitchen, alannah," said the old cook, as the hall door closed—"come down and sit with us there; sure it's no wonder your heart 'ud be low."

"Yes, Master Tommy, and Darby 'the blast' is there, and a tune and the pipes will raise you."

I suffered myself to be led along listlessly between them to the kitchen, where, around a huge fire of red turf, the servants of the house were all assembled, together with some neighbouring cottagers, Darby "the blast" occupying a prominent place in the party, his pipes laid across his knees, as he employed himself in concocting a smoking tumbler of punch.

"Your most obadient," said Darby, with a profound reverence, as I entered. "May I make so bowld as to surmise that my presence isn't unsaysonable to your feelin's? for I wouldn't be contumacious enough to adjudicate without your honour's permission."

What I muttered in reply I know not; but the whole party were speedily reseated, every eye turned admiringly on Darby for the very neat and appropriate expression of his apology.

Young as I was, and slight as had been the consideration heretofore accorded me, there was that in the lonely desolation of my condition which awakened all their sympathies, and directed all their interests towards me; and in no country are the differences of rank such slight barriers in excluding the feeling of one portion of the community from the sorrows of the others. The Irish peasant, however humble, seems to possess an intuitive tact on this subject, and to minister all the consolations in his power with a gentle delicacy that cannot be surpassed.

The silence caused by my appearing among them was unbroken for some time after I took my seat by the fire; and the only sounds were the clinking of a spoon against the glass, or the deep-drawn sigh of some compassionate

soul, as she wiped a stray tear from the corner of her eye with her apron.

Darby alone manifested a little impatience at the sudden change in a party where his powers of agreeability had so lately been successful, and fidgeted on his chair, unscrewed his pipes, blew into them, screwed them on again, and then slyly nodded over to the housemaid, as he raised his glass to his lips.

"Never mind me," said I to the old cook, who, between grief and the glare of a turf fire, had her face swelled out to twice its natural size—"never mind me, Molly, or I'll go away."

"And why would you, darlin'? Troth, no! sure there's nobody feels for you like them that was always about you. Take a cup of tay, alannah—it'll do you good."

"Yes, Master Tom," said the butler; "you never tasted anything since Tuesday night."

"Do, sir, av ye plaze!" said the pretty housemaid, as she stood before me, cup in hand.

"Arrah! what's tay?" said Darby, in a contemptuous tone of voice: "a few dirty laves, with a drop of water on top of them, that has neither beatification nor invigoration. Here's the '*fons animi!*'" said he, patting the whisky bottle affectionately. "Did ye ever hear of the ancients indulging in tay? D'ye think Polyphamus and Jupiter took tay?"

The cook looked down abashed and ashamed.

"Tay's good enough for women—no offence, Mrs. Cook!—but you might boil down Paykin and it'd never be potteen. '*Ex quo vis ligno non fit Mercurius*'—'You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.' That's the meaning of it—*ligno's* a sow."

Heaven knows I was in no mirthful mood at that moment, but I burst into a fit of laughing at this, in which, from a sense of politeness, the party all joined.

"That's it, acushla!" said the old cook, as her eyes sparkled with delight; "sure it makes my heart light to see you smilin' again. Maybe Darby would raise a tune now, and there's nothing equal to it for the spirits."

"Yes, Mr. M'Keown," said the housemaid, "play 'Kiss me twice;' Master Tom likes it."

"Devil a doubt he does," replied Darby, so maliciously

as to make poor Kitty blush a deep scarlet, “and no shame to him! But you see my fingers is cut, Master Tom, and I can’t perform the reduplicating intonations with proper effect.”

“How did that happen, Darby?” said the butler.

“Faix, easy enough. Tim Daly and myself was hunting a cat the other evening, and she was under the dhresser, and we wor poking her with a burnt stick and a raying-hook, and she somehow always escaped us, and except about an inch of her tail that we cut off, there was no getting at her; and at last I hated a toastin’-fork and put it in, when out she flew, teeth and claws, at me. Look, there’s where she stuck her thieving nails into my thumb, and took the piecè clean out. The onnatural baste!”

“Arrah!” said the old cook, with a most reflective gravity, “there’s nothing so treacherous as a cat!” A moral to the story which I found met general assent among the whole company.

“Nevertheless,” observed Darby, with an air of ill-dissembled condescension, “if it isn’t umbrageous to your honour, I’ll intonate something in the way of an ode, or a canticle.”

“One of your own, Darby,” said the butler, interrupting.

“Well, I’ve no objection,” replied Darby, with an affected modesty; “for you see, master, like Homer, I accompany myself on the pipes, though—glory be to God!—I’m not blind. The little thing I’ll give you is imitated from the ancients—like Tibullus or Euthropeus—in the natural key.”

Mister M’Keown, after this announcement, pushed his empty tumbler towards the butler with a significant glance, gave a few preparatory grunts with the pipes, followed by a long dolorous quaver, and then a still more melancholy cadence, like the expiring bray of an asthmatic jackass—all of which sounds, seeming to be the essential preliminaries to any performance on the bagpipes, were listened to with great attention by the company. At length, having assumed an imposing attitude, he lifted up both elbows, tilted his little finger affectedly up, dilated his cheeks, and began the following to the well-known air of “Una:”

MUSIC.

Of all the arts and sciences,
 'Tis music surely takes the sway ;
 It has its own appliances
 To melt the heart, or make it gay.
 To raise us,
 Or plaze us,
 There's nothing with it can compare ;
 To make us bowld,
 Or hot, or cowl'd,
 Just as suits the kind of air.
 There's not a woman, man, or child,
 That hasn't felt its powers too :
 Don't deny it !—when you smiled
 Your eyes confess'd—that so did you.

The very winds that sigh or roar —
 The leaves that rustle, dry and sear—
 The waves that beat upon the shore—
 They all are music to your ear.
 It was of use
 To Orpheus,
 He charmed the fishes in the say ;
 So everything
 Alive can sing—
 The kettle even sings for tay !
 There's not a woman, man, or child,
 That hasn't felt its power too ;
 Don't deny it !—when you smiled
 Your eyes confess'd—that so did you.

I have certainly, since this period, listened to more brilliant musical performances, but, for the extent of the audience, I do not think it was possible to reap a more overwhelming harvest of applause. Indeed the old cook kept repeating stray fragments of the words to every air that crossed her memory for the rest of the evening ; and as for Kitty, I intercepted more than one soft glance intended for Mister M'Keown as a reward for his minstrelsy.

Darby, to do him justice, seemed fully sensible of his triumph, and sat back in his chair, and imbibed his liquor like a man who had won his laurels, and needed no further efforts to maintain his eminent position in life.

As the wintry wind moaned dismally without, and the

leafless trees shook and trembled with the cold blast, the party drew in closer to the cheerful turf fire, with that sense of selfish delight that seems to revel in the contrast of in-door comfort with the bleakness and dreariness without.

“Well, Darby,” said the butler, “you weren’t far wrong when you took my advice to stay here for the night; listen to how it’s blowing.”

“That’s hail,” said the old cook, as the big drops came pattering down the chimney, and hissed on the red embers as they fell. “It’s a cruel night, glory be to God!” Here the old lady blessed herself—a ceremony which the others followed.

“For all that,” said Darby, “I ought to be up at Crocknavorrigha this blessed evening. Joe Neale was to be married to-day.”

“Joe! is it Joe?” said the butler.

“I wish her luck of him, whoever she is,” added the cook.

“Faix, and he’s a smart boy,” chimed in the housemaid, with something not far from a blush as she spoke.

“He was a raal devil for coortin’, any how,” said the butler.

“It’s just for peace he’s marrying now, then,” said Darby; “the women never gave him any quietness—just so, Kitty, you needn’t be looking cross that way—it’s truth I’m telling you; they were always coming about him, and teasing him, and the like, and he couldn’t bear it any longer.”

“Arrah, howld your prate,” interrupted the old cook, whose indignation for the honour of the sex could not endure more; “he’s the biggest liar from this to himself—and that same’s not a small word, Darby M’Keown.”

There was a pointedness in the latter part of this speech which might have led to angry consequences, had I not interposed, by asking Mr. M’Keown himself if he ever was in love.

“Arrah, it’s wishing it, I am, the same love. Sure my back and sides is sore with it—my misfortunes would fill a book. Didn’t I bind myself apprentice to a carpenter, for love of Molly Scraw, a niece he had, just to be near her, and be looking at her, and that’s the way I shaved off

the top of my thumb with the plane. By the mortal, it was near killing me; I usedn't to eat or drink; and though I was three years at the thrade, faix, at the end of it, I couldn't tell you the gimlet from the handsaw."

"And you wor never married, Mister M'Keown?" said Kitty.

"Never, my darling, but often mighty near it. Many's the quare thing happened to me," said Darby, meditatively; "and sure if it wasn't my guardian angel, or something of the kind prevented it, I'd maybe have more wives this day than the Emperor of Roossia himself."

"Arrah, don't be talking," grunted out the old cook, whose passion could scarcely be restrained at the boastful tone Mister M'Keown assumed in descanting on his successes.

"There was Bidy Finn," continued Darby, without paying any attention to the cook's interruption; "she might be Mrs. M'Keown this day, av it wasn't for a remarkable thing that happened."

"What was that?" said Kitty, with eager curiosity.

"Tell us about it, Mister M'Keown," said the butler.

"The devil a word of truth he'll tell you," grumbled the cook, as she raked the ashes with a stick.

"There's them here does not care for agreeable intercourse," said Darby, assuming a grand air.

"Come, Darby, I'd like to hear the story," said I.

After a few preparatory scruples, in which modesty, offended dignity, and conscious merit struggled, Mr. M'Keown began by informing us that he had once a most ardent attachment to a certain Bidy Finn, of Ballyclough, a lady of considerable personal attractions, to whom, for a long time, he had been constant, and at last, through the intervention of Father Curtin, agreed to marry. Darby's consent to the arrangements was not altogether the result of his reverence's eloquence, nor indeed the justice of the case—nor was it quite owing to Bidy's black eyes and pretty lips—but rather to the soul-persuading powers of some fourteen tumblers of strong punch which he swallowed at a *séance* in Bidy's father's house, one cold evening in November; after which he betook himself to the road homewards, where— But we must give his story in his own words:—

“Whether it was the prospect of happiness before me, or the potteen,” quoth Darby, “but so it was, I never felt a step of the road home that night, though it was every foot of five mile. When I came to a stile, I used to give a whoop, and over it; then I’d run for a hundred yards or two, flourish my stick, cry out, ‘Who’ll say a word against Biddy Finn?’ and then over another fence, flying. Well, I reached home at last, and wet enough I was, but I didn’t care for that. I opened the door and struck a light—there was the least taste of kindling on the hearth, and I put some dry sticks into it, and some turf, and knelt down and began blowing it up.

“‘Troth,’ says I to myself, ‘if I wor married, it isn’t this way I’d be—on my knees like a nagur; but when I’d come home, there ’ud be a fine fire blazin’ fornint me, and a clean table out before it, and a beautiful cup of tay waiting for me—and somebody I won’t mintion, sitting there, looking at me, smilin’.’

“‘Don’t be making a fool of yourself, Darby M’Keown,’ said a gruff voice near the chimley.

“I jumped at him, and cried out, ‘Who’s that?’ but there was no answer; and at last, after going round the kitchen, I began to think it was only my own voice I heard; so I knelt down again, and set to blowing away at the fire.

“‘And it’s yerself, Biddy,’ says I, ‘that would be an ornament to a dacent cabin; and a purtier leg and foot—’

“‘Be the light that shines, you’re making me sick, Darby M’Keown,’ said the voice again.

“‘The heavens be about us!’ says I, ‘what’s that, and who are you at all?’ for someways I thought I knew the voice.

“‘I’m your father!’ says the voice.

“‘My father!’ says I. ‘Holy Joseph, is it truth you’re telling me?’

“‘The divil a word o’ lie in it,’ says the voice. ‘Take me down, and give me an air o’ the fire, for the night’s cowl’d.’

“‘And where are you, father,’ says I, ‘av it’s plasing to ye?’

“‘I’m on the dhresser,’ says he. ‘Don’t you see me?’

“‘Sorra bit o’ me. Where now?’

"Arrah, on the second shelf, next the rowling-pin. Don't you see the green jug?—that's me."

"Oh, the saints in heaven be about us!" says I; "and are you a green jug?"

"I am," says he; "and sure I might be worse. Tim Healey's mother is only a cullender, and she died two years before me."

"Oh, father, darlin'," says I, "I hoped you wor in glory, and you only a jug all this time!"

"Never fret about it," says my father; "it's the transmogrification of sowls, and we'll be right by-and-by. Take me down, I say, and put me near the fire."

"So I up and took him down, and wiped him with a clean cloth, and put him on the hearth before the blaze."

"Darby," says he, "I'm famished with the druth. Since you took to coortin' there's nothing ever goes into my mouth—haven't you a taste of something in the house?"

"I wasn't long till I hated some wather, and took down the bottle of whisky and some sugar, and made a rousing jugful, as strong as need be."

"Are you satisfied, father?" says I.

"I am," says he, "you're a dutiful child; and here's your health, and don't be thinking of Biddy Finn."

"With that my father began to explain how there was never any rest nor quietness for a man after he married—more be token, if his wife was fond of talking; and that he never could take his dhrop of drink in comfort afterwards."

"May I never," says he, "but I'd rather be a green jug, as I am now, than alive again wid your mother. Sure it's not here you'd be sitting to-night," says he, "discoorsing with me, av you wor married, devil a bit. Fill me," says my father, "and I'll tell you more."

"And sure enough I did, and we talked away till near daylight; and then the first thing I did was to take the ould mare out of the stable, and set off to Father Curtin, and towld him all about it, and how my father wouldn't give his consent by no means."

"We'll not mind the marriage," says his rivirence; "but go back and bring me your father—the jug, I mean—and we'll try and get him out of trouble—for it's trouble he's in, or he wouldn't be that way. Give me the two-pound-

ten,' says the priest: 'you had it for the wedding, and it will be better spent getting your father out of purgatory than sending you into it.'”

“Arrah, aren't you ashamed of yourself?” cried the cook, with a look of ineffable scorn, as he concluded.

“Look now,” said Darby, “see this—if it isn't thruth——”

“And what became of your father?” interrupted the butler.

“And Biddy Finn, what did she do?” said the housemaid.

Darby, however, vouchsafed no reply, but sat back in his chair with an offended look, and sipped his liquor in silence.

A fresh brew of punch under the butler's auspices speedily, however, dispelled the cloud that hovered over the conviviality of the party; and even the cook vouchsafed to assist in the preparation of some rashers, which Darby suggested “were beautiful things for the thirst at this hour of the night”—but whether in allaying or exciting it, he didn't exactly lay down. The conversation now became general; and as they seemed resolved to continue their festivities to a late hour, I took the first opportunity I could, when unobserved, to steal away and return to my own room.

No sooner alone again than all the sorrow of my lonely state came back upon me; and as I laid my head on my pillow, the full measure of my misery flowed in upon my heart, and I sobbed myself to sleep.



CHAPTER III.

THE DEPARTURE.

THE violent beating of the rain against the glass, and the loud crash of the storm as it shook the window-frames, or snapped the sturdy branches of the old trees, awoke me. I got up, and, opening the shutters, endeavoured to look out; but the darkness was impenetrable, and I could see nothing but the gnarled and grotesque forms of the leafless trees dimly marked against the sky, as they moved to and fro like the arms of some mighty giant—masses of heavy snow melted by the rain fell at intervals from the steep roof, and struck the ground beneath with a low sumpth like thunder—a greyish, leaden tinge that marked the horizon showed it was near daybreak; but there was nought of promise in this harbinger of morning. Like my own career, it opened gloomily and in sadness; so felt I at least; and as I sat beside the window, and strained my eyes to pierce the darkening storm, I thought that even watching the wild hurricane without was better than brooding over the sorrows within my own bosom.

How long I remained thus I know not; but already the faint streak that announces sunrise marked the dull-coloured sky, when the cheerful sounds of a voice singing in the room underneath attracted me. I listened, and in a moment recognized the piper, Darby M'Keown. He moved quickly about, and by his motions I could collect that he was making preparations for his journey.

If I could venture to pronounce, from the merry tones of his voice, and the light elastic step with which he trod the floor, I certainly would not suppose that the dreary weather had any terror for him. He spoke so loud that I could catch a great deal of the dialogue he maintained with himself, and some odd verses of the song with which from time to time he garnished his reflections.

"Marry, indeed!—catch me at it—nabocklish—with the country side before me, and the hoith of good eating and

drinking for a blast of the chauntre. Well, well, women's quare craytures anyway.

Ho, ho ! Mister Barney,
 No more of your blarney,
 I'd have you not make so free ;
 You may go where you plaze,
 And make love at your ease,
 But the devil may have you for me.

Very well, Ma'am—Mister M'Keown is your most obedient—never say it twice, honey—and isn't there as good fish, eh?—whoop!

Oh ! my heart is unazy,
 My brain is run crazy,
 Sure it's often I wish I was dead ;
 'Tis your smile now so sweet,
 Now your ankles and feet,
 That's walked into my heart, Molly Spread.
 Tol de rol, de rol, oh !

Whew ! that's rain, anyhow. I wouldn't mind it, bad as it is, if I hadn't the side of a mountain before me ; but sure it comes to the same in the end. Catty Delany is a good warrant for a pleasant evening, and, please God, I'll be playing ' Baltiorum ' beside the fire there before this time to-night.

She'd a pig and boneens,
 And a bed and a dresser,
 And a nate little room
 For the father confessor,
 With a cupboard and curtains, and something, I'm towld,
 That his riv'rance liked, when the weather was cowld.
 And it's hurroo, hurroo ! Biddy O'Rafferty.

After all, faix, the priest bates us out. There's eight o'clock now, and I'm not off—devil a one's stirring in the house either. Well, I believe I may take my leave of it—sorrow many tunes of the pipes it's likely to hear, with Tony Basset over it ; and my heart's low when I think of that child there. Poor Tom ! and it was you liked fun when you could have it."

I wanted but the compassionate tone in which these few words were spoken to decide me in a resolution that I had been for some time pondering over. I knew that ere many hours Basset would come in search of me—I felt that,

once in his power, I had nothing to expect but the long-promised payment of his old debt of hatred to me. In a few seconds I ran over with myself the prospect of misery before me, and determined at once, at every hazard, to make my escape. Darby seemed to afford me the best possible opportunity for this purpose, and I dressed myself, therefore, in the greatest haste, and, throwing whatever I could find of my wardrobe into my carpet-bag, I pocketed my little purse, with all my worldly wealth—some twelve or thirteen shillings—and noiselessly slipped downstairs to the room beneath. I reached the door at the very moment Darby opened it to issue forth. He started back with fear, and crossed himself twice.

"Don't be afraid, Darby," said I, uneasy lest he should make any noise that would alarm the others; "I want to know which road you are travelling this morning."

"The saints be about us, but you frightened me, Master Tommy—though, intermediately, I may observe, I'm by no ways timorous. I'm going within two miles of Athlone."

"That's exactly where I want to go, Darby; will you take me with you?" for at the instant Captain Bubbleton's address flashed on my mind, and I resolved to seek him out and ask his advice in my difficulties.

"I see it all," replied Darby, as he placed the tip of his finger on his nose. "I conceive your embarrassments—you're afraid of Basset, and small blame to you; but don't do it, Master Tommy, don't do it, alannah: that's the hardest life at all."

"What?" said I, in amazement.

"To 'list: sure I know what you're after; faix, it would sarve you better to larn the pipes."

I hastened to assure Darby of his error, and in a few words informed him of what I had overheard of Basset's intentions respecting me.

"Make you an attorney!" said Darby, interrupting me abruptly—"an attorney! There's nothing so mean as an attorney; the police is gentlemen compared to them—they fight it out fair like men; but the other chaps sit in a house planning and contriving mischief all day long, inventing every kind of wickedness, and then getting people to do it. See, now, I believe in my conscience the devil

was the first attorney, and it was just to serve his own ends that he bred a ruction between Adam and Eve. But whisht! there's somebody stirring. Are you for the road?"

"Yes, Darby; my mind's made up."

Indeed, his own elegant eulogium on legal pursuits assisted my resolution, and filled my heart with renewed disgust at the thought of such a guardian as Tony Basset.

We walked stealthily along the gloomy passages, traversed the old hall, and noiselessly withdrew the heavy bolts and the great chain that fastened the door. The rain was sweeping along the ground in torrents, and the wind dashed it against the window-panes in fitful gusts. It needed all our strength to close the door after us against the storm, and it was only after several trials that we succeeded in doing so. The hollow sound of the oak door smote upon my heart as it closed behind me; in an instant the sense of banishment—of utter destitution—was present to my mind. I turned my eyes to gaze upon the old house—to take my last farewell of it for ever. Gloomy as my prospect was, my sorrow was less for the sad future than for the misery of the moment.

"No, Master Tom—no, you must go back," said Darby, who watched with a tender interest the sickly paleness of my cheek, and the tottering uncertainty of my walk.

"No, Darby," said I, with an effort at firmness, "I'll not look round any more." And bending my head against the storm, I stepped out boldly beside my companion. We walked on without speaking, and soon left the neglected avenue and ruined gate-lodge behind us, as we reached the high road that led to Athlone.

Darby, who only waited to let my first burst of sorrow find its natural vent, no sooner perceived from my step, and the renewed colour of my cheek, that I had rallied my courage once more, than he opened all his stores of agreeability, which, to my inexperience in such matters, were by no means inconsiderable. Abandoning at once all high-flown phraseology—which Mr. M'Keown, I afterwards remarked, only retained as a kind of gala suit for great occasions—he spoke freely and naturally; lightening the way with many a story—now grave, now gay—he seemed to care little for the inclemency of the weather, and looked

pleasantly forward to a happy evening as an ample reward for the present hardship.

"And the Captain, Master Tom; you say he's an agreeable man?" said Darby, alluding to my late companion on the coach, whose merits I was never tired of recapitulating.

"Oh, delightful! He has travelled everywhere, and seems to know everybody and everything. He's very rich, too—I forget how many houses he has in England, and elephants without number in India."

"Faix, you were in luck to fall in with him!" observed Darby.

"Yes, that I was! I'm sure he'll do something for me; and for you too, Darby, when he knows you have been so kind to me."

"Me! What did I do, darling? and what could I do, a poor piper like me? Wouldn't it be honour enough for me, if a gentleman's son would travel the road with me? Darby M'Keown's a proud man this day to have you beside him."

A ruined cabin in the road, whose blackened walls and charred timbers denoted its fate, here attracted my companion's attention. He stopped for a second or two to look on it, and then, kneeling down, he muttered a short prayer for the eternal rest of some one departed, and taking up a stone, he threw it on a heap of similar ones which lay near the door-side.

"What happened there, Derby?" said I, as he resumed his way.

"They wor out in the thrubles," was his only reply, as he cast a glance behind, to perceive if any one had remarked him.

Though he made no further allusion to the fate of those who once inhabited the cabin, he spoke freely of his own share in the eventful year of Ninety-eight; justifying, as it then seemed to me, every step of the patriotic party, and explaining the causes of their unsuccess so naturally and so clearly, that I could not help following with interest every detail of his narrative, and joining in his regrets for the unexpected and adverse strokes fortune dealt upon them. As he warmed with his subject, he spoke of France with an enthusiasm that I soon found contagious; he told me of the glorious career of the French armies in Italy and

Austria, and of that wonderful man of whom I then heard for the first time, as spreading a halo of victory over his nation; contrasting, as he went on, the rewards which awaited heroism and bravery in that service, with the purchased promotion in ours, artfully illustrating his position by a reference to myself, and what my fortunes would have been if born under that happier sky. "No elder brother there," said he, "to live in affluence, while the younger ones are turned out to wander on the wide world, houseless and penniless; and all these things we might have done, had we been but true to ourselves."

I drank in all he said with avidity; the bearing of his arguments on my own fortunes gave them an interest and an apparent truth my young mind eagerly devoured; and when he ceased to speak, I pondered over all he told me in a spirit that left its impress on my whole future life.

It was a new notion to me to connect my own fortunes with anything in the political condition of the country, and while it gave my young heart a kind of martyred courage, it set my brain a-thinking on a class of subjects which never before possessed any interest for me; there was a flattery, too, in the thought that I owed my straitened circumstances less to any demerits of my own, than to political disabilities. The time was well chosen by my companion to instil his doctrines into my heart—I was young, ardent, enthusiastic—my own wrongs had taught me to hate injustice and oppression—my condition had made me feel, and feel bitterly, the humiliation of dependence; and if I listened with eager curiosity to every story and every incident of the bygone rebellion, it was because the contest was represented to me as one between tyranny on one side and struggling liberty on the other. I heard the names of those who sided with the insurgent party extolled as the great and good men of their country—their ancient families and hereditary claims furnishing a contrast to many of the opposite party, whose recent settlement in the island and new-born aristocracy were held up in scoff and derision. In a word, I learned to believe that the one side was characterized by cruelty, oppression, and injustice, the other conspicuous only for endurance, courage, patriotism, and truth. What a pic-

ture was this to a mind like mine! and at a moment, too, when I seemed to realize, in my own desolation, an example of the very sufferings I heard of.

If the portrait M'Keown drew of Ireland was sad and gloomy, he painted France in colours the brightest and most seductive. Dwelling less on the political advantages which the revolution had won for the popular party, he directed my entire attention to the brilliant career of glory the French army had followed—the triumphant success of the Italian campaign—the war in Germany, and the splendour of Paris, which he represented as a very paradise on earth; but above all, he dwelt on the character and achievements of the First Consul, recounting many anecdotes of his early life, from the period when he was a schoolboy at Brienne, to the hour when he dictated the conditions of peace to the oldest monarchies of Europe, and proclaimed war with the voice of one who came as an avenger.

I drank in every word he spoke with avidity—the very enthusiasm of his manner was contagious—I felt my heart bound with rapturous delight at some hardy deed of soldierlike daring, and conceived a kind of wild idolatry for the man who seemed to have infused his own glorious temperament into the mighty thousands around him, and converted a whole nation into heroes.

Darby's information on all these matters—which seemed to me something miraculous—had been obtained at different periods from French emissaries who were scattered through Ireland, many of them old soldiers, who had served in the campaigns of Egypt and Italy.

"But sure, if you'd come with me, Master Tom, I could bring you where you'll see them yourself, and you could talk to them of the battles and skirmishes, for I suppose you spake French."

"Very little, Darby. How sorry I am now that I don't know it well."

"No matter, they'll soon teach you, and many a thing beside. There's a captain I know of, not far from where we are this minute, could learn you the small sword—in style, he could. I wish you saw him in his green uniform with white facings, and three elegant crosses upon it that General Bonaparte gave him with his own

hands; he had them on one Sunday, and I never see'd anything equal to it."

"And are there many French officers hereabouts?"

"Not now; no, they're almost all gone. After the rising they went back to France, except a few. Well, there'll be call for them again, please God."

"Will there be another rebellion, then, Darby?"

As I put this question fearlessly, and in a voice loud enough to be heard at some distance, a horseman, wrapped up in a loose cloth cloak, was passing; he suddenly pulled up short, and turning his horse round, stood exactly opposite to the piper. Darby saluted the stranger respectfully, and seemed desirous to pass on, but the other, turning round in his saddle, fixed a stern look on him, and he cried out,—

"What! at the old trade, M'Keown. Is there no curing you, eh?"

"Just so, Major," said Darby, assuming a tone of voice he had not made use of the entire morning; "I'm conveying a little instrumental recreation."

"None of your d—d gibberish with me. Who's that with you?"

"He's the son of a neighbour of mine, your honour," said Darby, with an imploring look at me not to betray him. "His father's a schoolmaster—a philomath, as one might say."

I was about to contradict this statement bluntly, when the stranger called out to me,—

"Mark me, young sir, you're not in the best of company this morning, and I recommend you to part with your friend as soon as may be. And you," said he, turning to Darby, "let me see you in Athlone at ten o'clock to-morrow. D'ye hear me?"

The piper grew pale as death as he heard this command, to which he only responded by touching his hat in silence; while the horseman, drawing his cloak around, dashed his spurs into his beast's flanks, and was soon out of sight. Darby stood for a moment or two looking down the road where the stranger had disappeared; a livid hue coloured his cheek, and a tremulous quivering of his under lip gave him the appearance of one in ague.

"I'll be even with ye yet," muttered he between his clenched teeth; "and when the hour comes——"

Here he repeated some words in Irish with a vehemence of manner that actually made my blood tingle; then suddenly recovering himself, he assumed a kind of sickly smile. "That's a hard man, the Major."

"I'm thinking," said Darby, after a pause of some minutes—"I'm thinking it's better for you not to go into Athlone with me; for if Basset wishes to track you out, that'll be the first place he'll try; besides, now that the Major has seen you, he'll never forget you."

Having pledged myself to adopt any course my companion recommended, he resumed:—

"Ay, that's the best way. I'll lave you at Ned Malone's, in the Glen; and when I've done with the Major in the morning, I'll look after your friend the Captain, and tell him where you are."

I readily assented to this arrangement, and only asked what distance it might yet be to Ned Malone's, for already I began to feel fatigue.

"A good ten miles," said Darby, "no less; but we'll stop here above, and get something to eat, and then we'll take a rest for an hour or two, and you'll think nothing of the road after."

I stepped out with increased energy at the cheering prospect; and although the violence of the weather was nothing abated, I consoled myself with thinking of the rest and refreshment before me, and resolved not to bestow a thought upon the present. Darby, on the other hand, seemed more depressed than before, and betrayed in many ways a state of doubt and uncertainty as to his movements—sometimes pushing on rapidly for half a mile or so, then relapsing into a slow and plodding pace, often looking back, too, and more than once coming to a perfect stand-still, talking the whole time to himself in a low muttering voice.

In this way we proceeded for above two miles, when at last I descried through the beating rain the dusky gable of a small cabin in the distance, and eagerly asked if that were to be our halting-place.

"Yes," said Darby, "that's Peg's cabin; and though it's not very remarkable in the way of cookery or the like, it's the only house within seven miles of us."

As we came nearer, the aspect of the building became even less enticing. It was a low mud hovel, with a miserable roof of sods, or scraws, as they are technically called; a wretched attempt at a chimney occupying the gable, and the front to the road containing a small square aperture, with a single pane of glass as a window, and a wicker contrivance in the shape of a door, which, notwithstanding the severity of the day, lay wide open to permit the exit of the smoke, which rolled more freely through this than through the chimney. A filthy pool of stagnant, green-covered water stood before the door, through which a little causeway of earth led. Upon this a thin, lank-sided sow was standing to be rained on, her long, pointed snout turned meditatively towards the luscious mud beside her. Displacing this important member of the family with an unceremonious kick, Darby stooped to enter the low doorway, uttering as he did so the customary "God save all here!" As I followed him in, I did not catch the usual response to the greeting and from the thick smoke which filled the cabin, could see nothing whatever around me.

"Well, Peg," said Darby, "how is it with you the day?"

A low grunting noise issued from the foot of a little mud wall beside the fire-place. I turned and beheld the figure of a woman of some seventy years of age, seated beside the turf embers; her dark eyes, bleared with smoke and dimmed with age, were still sharp and piercing, and her nose, thin and aquiline, indicated a class of features by no means common among the people. Her dress was the blue frieze coat of a labouring man, over the woollen gown usually worn by women. Her feet and legs were bare, and her head was covered with an old straw bonnet, whose faded ribbon and tarnished finery betokened its having once belonged to some richer owner. There was no vestige of any furniture—neither table, nor chair, nor dresser, nor even a bed, unless some straw laid against the wall in one corner could be thus called; a pot suspended over the wet and sodden turf by a piece of hay rope, and an earthen pipkin with water stood beside her. The floor of the hovel, lower in many places than the road without, was cut up into sloppy mud by the tread of the sow,

who ranged at will through the premises. In a word, more dire and wretched poverty it was impossible to conceive.

Darby's first movement was to take off the lid and peer into the pot, when the bubbling sound of the boiling potatoes assured him that we should have at least something to eat; his next was, to turn a little basket upside down for a seat, to which he motioned me with his hand; then, approaching the old woman, he placed his hand to his mouth and shouted in her ear,—

"What's the Major after this morning, Peg?"

She shook her head gloomily a couple of times, but gave no answer.

"I'm thinking there's bad work going on at the town there," cried he, in the same loud tone as before.

Peg muttered something in Irish, but far too low to be audible.

"Is she mad, poor thing?" said I, in a whisper.

The words were not well uttered, when she darted on me her black and piercing eyes, with a look so steadfast as to make me quail beneath them.

"Who's that there?" said the hag, in a croaking, harsh voice.

"He's a young boy from beyond Loughrea."

"No!" shouted she, in a tone of passionate energy, "don't tell me a lie. I'd know his brows among a thousand: he's a son of Mat Burke's, of Cronmore."

"Begorra, she is a witch—devil a doubt of it," muttered Darby between his teeth. "You're right, Peg," continued he, after a moment. "His father's dead, and the poor child's left nothing in the world."

"And so ould Mat's dead," interrupted she. "When did he die?"

"On Tuesday morning, before day."

"I was dhraming of him that morning, and I thought he kem up here to the cabin door on his knees, and said, 'Peggy, Peggy M'Caskey, I'm come to ax your pardon for all I done to you;' and I sat up in my bed, and cried out, 'Who's that?' and he said, 'Tis me—'tis Mister Burke—I'm come to give you back your lease.' 'I'll tell you what you'll give me back,' says I, 'give me the man whose heart you bruck with bad treatment—give me the two fine

boys you transported for life—give me back twenty years of my own, that I spent in sorrow and misery.’”

“Peg, acushla! don’t speak of it any more. The poor child here, that’s fasting from daybreak, he isn’t to blame for what his father did. I think the praties is done by this time.”

So saying, he lifted the pot from the fire, and carried it to the door to strain off the water. The action seemed to rouse the old woman, who rose rapidly to her legs, and, hastening to the door, snatched the pot from his hand and pushed him to one side.

“’Tis two days since I tasted bit or sup. ’Tis God himself knows when and where I may have it again; but if I never broke my fast I’ll not do it with the son of him that left me a lone woman this day, that brought the man that loved me to the grave, and my children to shame for ever.”

As she spoke, she dashed the pot into the road with such force as to break it into fifty pieces; and then, sitting down on the outside of the cabin, she wrung her hands and moaned piteously, in the very excess of her sorrow.

“Let us be going,” said Darby, in a whisper. “There’s no spaking to her when she’s one of them fits on her.”

We moved silently from the hovel, and gained the road. My heart was full to bursting—shame and abasement overwhelmed me, and I dared not look up.

“Good-bye, Peg. I hope we’ll be better friends when we meet again,” said Darby, as he passed out.

She made no reply, but entered the cabin, from which, in an instant after, she emerged, carrying a lighted sod of turf in a rude wooden tongs.

“Come along quick,” said Darby, with a look of terror, “she’s going to curse you.”

I turned round, transfixed and motionless. If my life depended on it, I could not have stirred a limb. The old woman by this time had knelt down on the road, and was muttering rapidly to herself.

“Come along, I say,” said Darby, pulling me by the arm.

“And now,” cried the hag aloud, “may bad luck be your shadow wherever you walk, with sorrow behind and bad hopes before you—may you never taste happiness

nor ease, and, like this turf, may your heart be always burning here, and——”

I heard no more, for Darby, tearing me away by main force, dragged me along the road, just as the hissing turf embers had fallen at my feet, where the hag had thrown them.



CHAPTER IV.

MY WANDERINGS.

I CANNOT deny it, the horrible imprecation I had heard uttered against me seemed to fill up the cup of my misery. An outcast, without home, without a friend, this alone was wanting to overwhelm me with very wretchedness; and, as I covered my face with both hands, I thought my heart would break.

“Come, come, Master Tom,” said Darby, “don’t be afeard, it’ll never do you harm, all she said. I made the sign of the cross on the road between you and her with the end of my stick, and you’re safe enough this time. Faix, she’s a quare divil when she’s roused—to destroy an illigint pot of praties that way; but sure she had hard provocation. Well, well, you warn’t to blame, any how: Tony Basset will have a sore reckoning some day for all this.”

The mention of that name recalled me in a moment to the consideration of my own danger if he were to succeed in overtaking me, and I eagerly communicated my fear to Darby.

“That’s throe,” said he; “we must leave the high road, for Basset will be up at the house by this, and will lose no time in following you out. If you had a bit of something to eat.”

“As to that, Darby,” said I, with a sickly effort to smile, “Peg’s curse took away my appetite, full as well as her potatoes would have done.”



The Curse.

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"'Tis a bad way to breakfast, after all," said Darby. "Do you ever take a shaugh of the pipe, Master Tom?"

"No," said I, laughing, "I never learned to smoke yet."

"Well," replied he, a little piqued by the tone of my answer, "'tis worse you might be doin' than that same. Tobacco's a fine thing for the heart! Many's the time, when I'm alone, if I hadn't the pipe I'd be lone and sorrowful—thinking over the hard times and the like; but when I've filled my dudeen, and do be watching the smoke curling up, I begin dhraming about sitting round the fire with pleasant companions, chatting away, and discorsing, and telling stories; and then I invint the stories to myself about quare devils of pipers travelling over the country, making love here and there, and playing dhroll tunes out of their own heads; and then I make the tunes to them: and after that, maybe, I make words, and sometimes lay down the pipe and begin siuging to myself; and often I take up the bagpipes and play away with all my might, till I think I see the darlingest little fairies ever you seen dancing before me, setting to one another, and turning round, and capering away—down the middle and up again: small chaps, with three-cornered hats, and wigs, and little red coats, all slashed with goold; and beautiful little craytures houlding their petticoats this way, to show a nate leg and foot; and I do be calling out to them—'Hands round'—'That's your sowl'—'Look at the green fellow, 'tis himself can do it'—'Rise the jig, hoo!' and faix 'tis sorry enough I'm when they go, and lave me all alone by myself."

"And how does all that come into your head, Darby?"

"Troth, 'tis hard to tell," said Darby, with a sigh; "but my notion is, that the poor man that has neither fine houses, nor fine clothes, nor horses, nor sarvants to amuse him, that Providence is kind to him in another way, and fills his mind with all manner of dbroll thoughts, and quare stories, and bits of songs, and the like; and lets him into many a sacret about fairies, and the good people, that the rich has no time for: and sure you must have often remarked it, that the quality has never a bit of fun in them at all, but does be always coming to us for something to make them laugh. Did you never lave the parlour, when the company was sitting with lashings of

wine and fruit, and every convaniency, and go down stairs to the kitchen, where maybe there was nothing but a salt herrin' and a jug of punch, and if you did, where was the most fun, I wondher? Arrah, when they bid me play a tune for them, and I look at their sorrowful pale faces, and their dim eyes, and the stiff way they sit upon their chairs, I never put heart in it; but when I rise 'Dirty James,' or 'The Little Bould Fox,' or 'Kiss my Lady,' for the boys and girls, sure 'tis my whole sowl does be in the bag, and I squeeze the notes out of it with all my might."

In this way did Darby converse until we reached a cross road, when, coming to a halt, he pointed with his finger to the distance, and said,—

"Athlone is down beyond that low mountain. Now, Ned Malone's is only six short miles from this. You keep this by-road till you reach the smith's forge, then turn off to the left, across the fields, till you come to an ould ruin, lave that to your right hand, and follow the boreen straight, 'twill bring you to Ned's doore."

"But I don't know him," said I.

"What signifies that—sure 'tis no need you have—tell him you'll stop there till Darby the Blast comes for you; and see, now, here's all you have to do—put your right thumb in the palm of your left hand, this way, and then kiss the other thumb, and then you have it; but mind you don't do that till you're alone with him—'tis a token between ourselves."

"I wish you were coming with me, Darby—I'd rather not leave you!"

"'Tis myself mislikes it, too," said Darby, with a sigh; "but I daren't miss going to Athlone, the Major would soon ferret me out—and it's worse it would be for me."

"And what am I to do if Mr. Basset comes after me?"

If he hasn't a throop of horse at his back, you may laugh at him in Ned Malone's. And now good-bye, acushla; and don't let your heart be low—you'll be a man soon, you know."

The words of encouragement could not have been more happily chosen to raise my drooping spirits. The sense of opening manhood was already stirring within me, and waited but for some direct occasion to elicit it in full vigour.

I shook Darby's hand with a firm grasp, and, assuming the easiest smile I could accomplish, I set out on the path before me with all the alacrity in my power.

The first thought that shot across my mind when I parted with my companion was the utter loneliness of my condition; the next—and it followed immediately on the other—was the bold consciousness of personal freedom. I enjoyed, at the moment, the untrammelled liberty to wander, without let or control. All memory of Tony Basset was forgotten, and I only remembered the restraint of school and the tyranny of my master. My plan—and already I had formed a plan—was to become a farmer's servant—to work as a daily labourer. Ned Malone would probably accept of me, young as I was, in that capacity; and I had no other ambition than such as secured my independence.

As I travelled along I wove within my mind a whole web of imaginary circumstances—of days of peaceful toil; of nights of happy and contented rest; of friendship formed with those of my own age and condition; of the long summer evenings, when I should ramble alone to commune with myself on my humble but happy lot; on the red hearth in winter, around which the merry faces of the cottagers were beaming, as some pleasant tale was told; and as I asked myself, would I exchange a life like this for all the advantages of fortune my brother's position afforded him, my heart replied, No. Even then the words of the piper had worked upon me, and already had I connected the possession of wealth with oppression and tyranny, and the lowly fortunes of the poor man as alone securing high-souled liberty of thought and freedom of speech and action.

I trudged along through the storm, turning from time to time to see that I was not pursued; for, as the day waned, my fear of being overtaken increased, and in every moaning of the wind and every rustle of the branches I thought I heard Tony Basset summoning me to stop and surrender myself his prisoner. This dread gradually gave way, as the loneliness of the road was unbroken by a single traveller, the wild half-tilled fields presented no living object far or near, the thick rain swooped along the swampy earth, and, in its misty dark-

ness, shut out all distant prospect, and a sadder picture eye never rested on.

At length I reached the ruined church Darby spoke of, and following the track he indicated, soon came out upon the breen, where for the first time some little shelter existed.

It was only at nightfall, when fatigue and hunger had nearly obtained the victory over me, that I saw, at some short distance in front, the long roof of a well-thatched cabin; as I came nearer, I could perceive that it contained several windows, and that the door was sheltered by a small porch—marks of comfort by no means common among the neighbouring farmers; lights moved here and there through the cabin, and the voices of people driving in the cows, and the barking of dogs, were welcome sounds to my ear. A half-clad urchin, of some seven years old, armed with a huge bramble, was driving a flock of turkeys before him as I approached; but instead of replying to my question, "If this were Ned Malone's?" the little fellow threw down his weapon, and ran for his life. Before I could recover from my surprise at his strange conduct the door opened, and a large, powerful-looking man, in a long blue coat, appeared. He carried a musket in his hand, which, as soon as he perceived the figure before him, he laid down within the porch, calling out to some one inside,—

"Go back, Maurice—it's nothing. Well, sir," continued he, addressing me, "do you want anybody hereabouts?"

"Is this Ned Malone's, may I ask?" said I.

"It is," answered he, "and I am Ned Malone, at your service; and what then?"

There was something in the cold, forbidding tone in which he spoke, as well as in the hard severity of his look, that froze all my resolution to ask a favour, and I would gladly have sought elsewhere for shelter for the night, had I known where to look.

The delay this indecision on my part created caused him to repeat his question, while he fixed his eyes on me with a dark and piercing expression.

"Darby the Blast told me," said I, with a great effort to seem at ease, "that you would give me shelter to-night. To-morrow morning he's to come here for me."

“And who are you?” said he, harshly, “that I am to take into my house? In these troublesome times a man may ask the name of his lodger.”

“My name is Burke. My father’s name was Burke, of Cremore, but he’s dead now.”

“’Tis you that Basset is after all day, is it?”

“I can’t tell, but I fear it may be.”

“Well, some one told him that you took the Dublin road, and another sent him up here, and the boys here sent him to Durragh. And what are you after, young gentleman? Do you dislike Tony Basset? Is that it?”

“Yes,” said I, “I’m resolved never to go home and live with him. He made my father hate me, and through him I have been left a beggar.”

“There’s more than you has a score to settle with Tony. Come into the house and get your clothes dried. But stop, I have a bit of a caution to give you. If you see anything or anybody while you’re under my roof that you didn’t expect——”

“Trust me there,” interrupted I, eagerly, and making the sign the piper had taught me.

“What!” cried Malone, in astonishment, “are you one of us? Is a son of Matt Burke’s going to redress the wrongs his father and grandfather before him inflicted? Give me your hand, my brave boy; there’s nothing in this house isn’t your own from this minit.”

I grasped his strong hand in mine, and with a proud and swelling heart, followed him into the cabin.

A whisper crept round the various persons that sat and stood about the kitchen fire as I appeared among them; and the next moment one after another pressed anxiously forward to shake hands with me.

“Help him off with his wet clothes, Maurice,” said Malone, to a young man of some twenty years; and in a few seconds my wet garments were hung on chairs before the blaze, and I myself, accompanied with a frieze coat that would make a waistcoat for an elephant, sat basking before the cheerful turf fire. The savoury steam of a great mess of meat and potatoes induced me to peep into the large pot over the fire; a hearty burst of laughing from the whole party acknowledged their detection of my ravenous hunger, and the supper was smoking on the

board in a few minutes after. Unhappily, a good number of years have rolled over my head since that night; but I still hesitate to decide whether to my appetite or to Mrs. Malone's cookery I should attribute it, but certainly my performance on that occasion called forth unqualified admiration.

I observed, during the supper, that one of the girls carried a plateful of the savoury dish into a small room at the end of the kitchen, carefully closing the door after her as she entered, and, when she came out, exchanging with Malone a few hurried words, to which the attention of the others was evidently directed. The caution I had already received, and my own sense of propriety, prevented my paying any attention to this, and I conversed with those about me, freely narrating the whole circumstances of my departure from home, my fear of Basset, and my firm resolve—come what might—never to become an inmate of his house and family. Not all the interest they took in my fortunes, nor even the warm praises of what they called my courage and manliness, could ward off the tendency to sleep, and my eyes actually closed as I lay down in my bed, and, notwithstanding the noise of voices and the sounds of laughter so near me, sank into the heaviest slumber.



CHAPTER V.

THE CABIN.

BEFORE day broke, the stir and bustle of the household awoke me, and, had it not been for the half-open door, which permitted a view of the proceedings in the kitchen, I should have been sadly puzzled to remember where I was. The cheerful turf fire, the happy faces, and the pleasant voices, all reminded me of the preceding night, and I lay pondering over my fortunes, and revolving within myself many a plan for the future.

In all the day-dreams of ambition in which youth indulges, there is this advantage over the projects of maturer years—the past never mingles with the future. In after life our by-gone existence is ever tinging the time to come; the expectations friends have formed of us, the promises we have made to our own hearts, the hopes we have created, seem to pledge us to something which, if unattained, sounds like failure; but, in earlier years, the budding consciousness of our ability to reach the goal does but stimulate us, and never chills our efforts by the dread of disappointment. We have, as it were, only bound ourselves in recognizances with our own hearts—the world has not gone bail for us, and our falling short involves not the ruin of others, nor the loss of that self-respect which is but the reflex of the opinion of society. I felt this strongly; and, the more I ruminated on it, the more resolutely bent was I to adopt some bold career—some enterprising path, where ambition should supply to me the pleasures and excitements that others found among friends and home.

I now perceived how unsuitable would be to me the quiet monotony of a peasant's life—how irksome the recurrence of the same daily occupations—the routine of ceaseless labour—the intercourse with those whose views and hopes strayed not beyond their own hedge-rows. A soldier's life appeared to realize all that I looked for; but then, the conversation of the piper recurred to me, and I remembered

how he painted these men to me as mere hireling bravos, to whom glory or fame was nothing, merely actuated by the basest of passions, the slaves of tyranny. All the atrocities he mentioned of the military in the past year came up before me, and with them the brave resistance of the people in their struggle for independence. How my heart glowed with enthusiasm as I thought over the bold stand they had made, and how I panted to be a man, and linked in such a cause. Every gloomy circumstance in my own fate seemed as the result of that grinding oppression under which my country suffered, even to the curse vented on me by one whose ruin and desolation lay at my own father's door. My temples throbbed, and my heart beat painfully against my side, as I revolved these thoughts within me; and when I rose from my bed that morning I was a rebel with all my soul.

The day, like the preceding one, was stormy and inclement. The rain poured down without ceasing, and the dark, lowering sky gave no promise of better things. The household of the cottage remained all at home, and betook themselves to such occupations as in-door permitted. The women sat down to their spinning-wheels—some of the men employed themselves in repairing their tools, and others in making nets for fishing; but all were engaged. Meanwhile, amid the sounds of labour was mixed the busy hum of merry voices, as they chatted away pleasantly, with many a story and many a song lightening the long hours of the dark day. As for me, I longed impatiently for Darby's return; a thousand half-formed plans were flitting through my mind, and I burned to hear whether Basset was still in pursuit of me—what course he was adopting to regain me within his control—if Darby had seen my friend Bubbleton, and whether he showed any disposition to befriend and protect me. These and such like thoughts kept passing through my mind; and, as the storm would shake the rude door, I would stand up with eagerness, hoping every moment to see him enter. But the day moved on, and the dusky half-light of a wintry afternoon was falling, and Darby made not his appearance. When I spoke of him to the others, they expressed no surprise at his absence, merely remarking that he was always uncertain—no one knew when to expect him—that he rarely came

when they looked for him, and constantly dropped in when no one anticipated it.

"There he is now, then," said one of the young men, springing up and opening the door; "I hear his voice in the glen."

"Do you see him, Maurice?" cried Malone. "Is it him?"

The young man stepped back, his face pale as death, and his mouth partly open. He whispered a word in the old man's ear, to which the other responded:

"Where?" The youth pointed with his finger. "How many are they?" was his next question, while his dark eye glanced towards the old musket that hung on the wall above the fire.

"Too many—too many for us," said Maurice, bitterly.

The women, who had gathered around the speaker, looked at each other with an expression of utter wretchedness, when one of them, breaking from the others, rushed into the little inner room off the kitchen, and slammed the door violently behind her. The next instant the sound of voices was heard from the room, as if in altercation. Malone turned round at once, and, throwing the door wide open, called out:

"Be quiet, I say. There's not a moment to be lost. Maurice, put that gun away—Shamus, take up your net again—sit down, girls."

At the same instant he drew from his bosom a long horse pistol, and, having examined the loading and priming, replaced it within his waistcoat, and sat down on a chair beside the fire, his strongly marked countenance fixed on the red blaze, while his lips muttered rapidly some words to himself.

"Are ye ready there?" he cried, as his eyes were turned towards the small door.

"In a minit," said the woman from within.

At the same instant the sounds of voices and the regular tramp of men marching were heard without.

"Halt! stand at ease!" called out a deep voice, and the clank of the muskets as they fell to the ground was heard through the cabin. Meanwhile, every one within had resumed his previous place and occupation, and the buzz of voices resounded through the kitchen, as though no inter-

ruption whatever had taken place. The latch was now lifted, and a sergeant, stooping to permit his tall feather to pass in, entered, followed by a man in plain clothes.

The latter was a short, powerfully-built man, of about fifty; his hair of a grizzly grey, contrasted with the deep purple of his countenance, which was swollen and bloated—the mouth, its most remarkable feature, was large and thick-lipped—the under lip projecting considerably forward, and having a strange, convulsive motion when he was not speaking.

"It's a hard day, Mister Barton," said Malone, rising from his seat, and stroking down his hair with one hand. "Won't ye come over and take an air at the fire?"

"I will, indeed, Ned," said he, taking the proffered seat, and stretching out his legs to the blaze. "It's a severe seaso we have. I don't know how the poor are to get in the turf; the bogs are very wet entirely."

"They are, indeed, sir; and the harvest 'ill be very late getting in now," said one of the young men, with a most obsequious voice. "Won't ye sit down, sir?" said he to the sergeant.

A nod from Mister Barton in acquiescence decided the matter, and the sergeant was seated.

"What's here, Mary?" said Barton, striking the large pot that hung over the fire with his foot.

"It's the boys' dinner, sir," said the girl.

"I think it wouldn't be a bad job if we joined them," replied he, laughingly—"eh, sergeant?"

"There 'ill be enough for us all," said Malone, "and I'm sure ye're welcome to it."

The table was quickly spread, the places next the fire being reserved for the strangers; while Malone, unlocking a cupboard, took down a bottle of whisky, which he placed before them, remarking, as he did so—

"Dont be afeard, gentlemen—'tis Parliament."

"That's right, Malone. I like a man to be loyal in these bad times; there's nothing like it. Faith, Mary, you're a good cook—that's as savoury a stew as ever I tasted. Where's Patsey now? I haven't seen him for some time."

The girl's face grew dark red, and then became as suddenly

pale; when, staggering back, she lifted her apron to her face, and leaned against the dresser.

"He's transported for life," said Malone, in a deep, sepulchral voice, while all his efforts to conceal agitation were fruitless.

"Oh, I remember," said Barton, carelessly, "he was in the dock with the Hogans. I'll take another bone from you Ned. Sergeant, that's a real Irish dish, and no bad one either."

"What's doing at the town to-day?" said Malone, affecting an air of easy indifference.

"Nothing remarkable, I believe; they have taken up that rascal, Darby the Blast, as they call him. The Major had him under examination this morning for two hours; and they say he'll give evidence against the Dillons—a little more fat if ye please—money, you know, Ned, will do anything these times."

"You ought to know that, sir," said Maurice, with such an air of assumed innocence as actually made Barton look ashamed. In an instant, however, he recovered himself, and pretended to laugh at the remark. "Your health, sergeant—Ned Malone, your health—ladies, yours, and boys the same." A shower of "thank ye, sir's," followed this piece of unlooked-for courtesy. "Who's that boy there, Ned?" said he, pointing to me as I sat with my eyes riveted upon him.

"He's from this side of Banagher, sir," said Malone, evading the question.

"Come over here, younker. What's his name?"

"Tom, sir."

"Come over, Tom, till I teach you a toast. Here's a glass, my lad—hold it steady, till I fill you a bumper. Did you ever hear tell of the croppies?"

"No, never."

"Never heard of the croppies! Well, you're not long in Ned Malone's company anyhow—eh? ha! ha! ha! Well, my man, the croppies is another name for the rebels, and the toast I'm going to give you is about them. So mind you finish it at one pull—here now, are you ready?"

"Yes, quite ready," said I, as I held the brimming glass straight before me.

"Here's it, then :—

" 'May every croppy taste the rope,
And find some man to bang them;
May Bagnal Harvey and the Pope
Have Heppenstal to hang them.' "

I knew enough of the meaning of his words to catch the allusion, and dashing the glass with all my force against the wall, I smashed it into a hundred pieces. Barton sprang from his chair, his face dark with passion ; clutching me by the collar with both hands, he cried out, "Halloa there without, bring in the handcuffs here ! As sure as my name's Sandy Barton, we'll teach you that toast practically, and that ere long.

"Take care what you do there," said Malone, fiercely ; "that young gentleman is a son of Matthew Burke of Cremore ; his relatives are not the kind of people to figure in your riding-house."

"Are you a son of Matthew Burke ? "

"I am."

"What brings you here then?—why are you not at home ? "

"By what right do you dare to ask me ? I have yet to learn how far I am responsible for where I go to a thief-catcher."

"You hear that, sergeant ; you heard him use a word to bring me into contempt before the people, and excite them to use acts of violence towards me."

"No such thing, Mister Barton," said Malone coolly ; "nobody here has any thought of molesting you. I told you that young gentleman's name and condition, to prevent you making any mistake concerning him ; for his friends are not the people to trifle with."

This artfully-put menace had its effect ; Barton sat down again, and appeared to reflect for a few minutes ; then taking a roll of paper from his pocket, he began leisurely to peruse it. The silence at this moment was something horribly oppressive.

"This is a search-warrant, Mr. Malone," said Barton, laying down the paper on the table, "empowering me to seek for the body of a certain French officer, said to be concealed in these parts. Informations on oath state that

he passed, at least, one night under your roof. As he has not accepted the amnesty granted to the other officers in the late famous attempt against the peace of this country, the law will deal with him as strict justice may demand; at the same time, it is right you should know that harbouring or sheltering him, under these circumstances, involves the person or persons so doing in his guilt. Mr. Malone's well-known and tried loyalty," continued Barton, with a half grin of most malicious meaning, "would certainly exculpate him from any suspicion of this nature; but sworn informations are stubborn things, and it is possible that, in ignorance of the danger such a proceeding would involve——"

"I thought the thrubbles was over, sir," interrupted Malone, wiping his forehead with the back of his hand, "and that an honest, industrious man, that minded his own business, had nothing to fear from any one."

"And you thought right," said Barton, slowly and deliberately, while he scanned the other's features with a searching look; "and that is the very fact I'm come to ascertain; and now, with your leave, we'll first search the house and offices, and then I'll put a little interrogatory to such persons as I think fit, touching this affair."

"You're welcome to go over the cabin whenever you like," said Malone, rising, and evidently labouring to repress his passionate indignation at Barton's coolness.

Barton stood up at the same moment, and giving a wink at the sergeant to follow, walked towards the small door I've already mentioned. Malone's wife at this started forward, and, catching Barton's arm, whispered a few words in his ear.

"She must be a very old woman by this time," said Barton, fixing his sharp eyes on the speaker.

"Upwards of ninety, sir, and bedridden for twelve years," said the woman, wiping a tear away with her apron.

"And how comes it she's so afraid of the soldiers, if she's doting?"

"Arrah! they used to frighten her so much, coming in at night, and firing shots at the doore, and drinking and singing songs, that she never got over it, and that's the rayson. I'll beg of your honour not to bring in the

sergeant, and to disturb her only as little as you can, for it sets her raving about battles and murders, and it's maybe ten days before we'll get her mind at ease again."

"Well, well, I'll not trouble her," said he, quickly. "Sergeant, step back for a moment."

With this he entered the room, followed by the woman, whose uncertain step and quiet gesture seemed to suggest caution.

"She's asleep, sir," said she, approaching the bed. "It's many a day since she had as fine a sleep as that. 'Tis good luck you brought us this morning, Mister Barton."

"Draw aside the curtain a little," said Barton, in a low voice, as if fearing to awake the sleeper.

"'Tis rousing her up, you'll be, Mister Barton. She feels the light at wanst."

"She breathes very long for so old a woman," said he somewhat louder, "and has a good broad shoulder, too. I'd like, if it was only for curiosity, just to see her face a little closer. I thought so! Come, Captain, it's no use——"

A scream from the woman drowned the remainder of the speech, while at the same instant one of the young men shut to the outside door, and barred it. The sergeant was immediately pinioned with his hands behind his back, and Malone drew his horse-pistol from his bosom, and, holding up his hand, called out,—

"Not a word—not a word! If ye spake, it will be the last time ever you'll do so!" said he to the sergeant.

At the same moment, the noise of a scuffle was heard in the inner room, and the door burst suddenly open, and Barton issued forth, dragging in his strong hands the figure of a young, slightly-formed man. His coat was off, but his trousers were braided with gold, in military fashion; and his black moustache denoted the officer. The struggle of the youth to get free was utterly fruitless; Barton's grasp was on his collar, and he held him as though he were a child.

Malone stooped down towards the fire, and, opening the pan of his pistol, examined the priming; then, slapping it down again, he stood erect.

"Barton," said he, in a tone of firm determination I heard him use for the first time—"Barton, it's

bad to provoke a man with the halter round his neck! I know what's before me well enough now. But, see, let him escape—give him two hours to get away—and here I'll surrender myself your prisoner, and follow you where you like."

"Break in the door, there, blast ye!" was the reply to this offer, as Barton shouted to the soldiers at the top of his voice. Two of the young men darted forward as he spoke, and threw themselves against it. "Fire through it!" cried Barton, stamping with passion.

"You will have it, will you, then?" said Malone, as he ground his teeth in anger; then, raising his pistol, he sprang forward, and holding it within a yard of Barton's face, shouted out, "There!" The powder flashed in the lock, and, quick as its own report, Barton hurled the Frenchman round to protect him from the ball, but only in time to receive the shot in his right arm as he held it uplifted. The arm fell powerless to his side, while Malone, springing on him like a tiger, grasped him in his powerful grip, and they both rolled upon the ground in terrible conflict. The Frenchman stood for an instant like one transfixed, then, bursting from the spot, dashed through the kitchen to the small room I had slept in. One of the young men followed him. The crash of glass, and the sounds of breaking wood-work were heard among the other noises, and at the same moment the door gave way in front, and the soldiers with fixed bayonets entered at a charge.

"Fire on them! fire on them!" shouted Barton, as he lay struggling on the ground; and a random volley rang through the cabin, filling it with smoke. A yell of anguish burst forth at the moment, and one of the women lay stretched upon the hearth, her bosom bathed in blood. The scene was now a terrible one; for, although overpowered by numbers, the young men rushed on the soldiers, and, regardless of wounds, endeavoured to wrest their arms from them. The bayonets glanced through the blue smoke, and shouts of rage and defiance rose up amid frightful screams of suffering and woe. A bayonet-stab in the side, received I know not how, sent me half fainting into the little room, through which the Frenchman had escaped. The open window being before me, I

did not deliberate a second, but, mounting the table, crept through it, and fell heavily on the turf outside. In a moment after I rallied, and, staggering onwards, reached a potato-field, where, overcome by pain and weakness, I sank into one of the furrows, scarcely conscious of what had occurred.

Weak and exhausted as I was, I could still hear the sounds of the conflict that raged within the cabin. Gradually, however, they grew fainter and fainter, and at last subsided altogether. Yet I feared to stir; and although night was now falling, and the silence continued unbroken, I lay still, hoping to hear some well-known voice, or even the footstep of some one belonging to the house; but all was calm, and nothing stirred. The very air, too, was hushed; not a leaf moved in the thin, frosty atmosphere. The dread of finding the soldiers in possession of the cabin made me fearful of quitting my hiding-place, and I did not move. Some hours had passed over ere I gained courage enough to raise my head and look about me.

My first glance was directed towards the distant high-road, where I expected to have seen some of the party who attacked the cabin; but, far as my eye could reach, no living thing was to be seen; my next was towards the cabin, which, to my horror, and amazement, I soon perceived was enveloped in a thick, dark smoke, that rolled lazily from the windows and doorway, and even issued from the thatched roof. As I looked, I could hear the crackling of timber and the sound of wood burning. These continued to increase; and then a red, forked flame shot through one of the casements, and, turning upwards, caught the thatch, where, passing rapidly across the entire roof, it burst into a broad sheet of fire, which died out again as rapidly, and left the gloomy smoke triumphant.

Meanwhile, a roaring sound, like that of a furnace, was heard from within; and at last, with an explosion like a mortar, the roof burst open, and the bright blaze sprang forth; the rafters were soon enveloped in fire, and the heated straw rose into the air, and floated in thin streaks of flame through the black sky. The door-cases and the window-frames were all burning, and marked their outlines against the dark walls; and, as the thatch was con-

sumed, the red rafters were seen like the ribs of a skeleton, but they fell in one by one, sending up in their descent millions of red sparks into the dark air. The black wall of the cabin had given way to the heat, and through its wide fissure I could see the interior, now one mass of undistinguishable ruin: nothing remained, save the charred and blackened walls.

I sat gazing at this sad sight like one entranced. Sometimes it seemed to me as a terrible dream; and then the truth would break upon me with fearful force, and my heart felt as though it would burst far beyond my bosom. The last flickering flame died away; the hissing sounds of the fire were stilled; and the dark walls stood out against the bleak background in all their horrible deformity, as I rose and entered the cabin. I stood within the little room where I had slept the night before, and looked out into the kitchen, around whose happy hearth the merry voices were so lately heard. I brought them up before me, in imagination, as they sat there. One by one I marked their places in my mind, and thought of the kindness of their welcome to me, and the words of comfort and encouragement they spoke. The hearth was now cold and black; the pale stars looked down between the walls, and a chill moonlight flickered through the gloomy ruin. My heart had no room for sorrow, but another feeling found a place within it—a savage thirst for vengeance—vengeance upon those who had desecrated a peaceful home, and brought blood and death among its inmates! Here was the very realization before my eyes of what M'Keown had been telling me; here the horrible picture he had drawn of tyranny and outrage. In the humble cottagers I saw but simple-minded peasants, who had opened their doors to some poor unfriended outcast—one who, like myself, had neither house nor home. I saw them offering their hospitality to him who sought it, freely and openly; and at last, adventuring all they possessed in the world, rather than betray him—and their reward was this! Oh, how my heart revolted at such oppression! how my spirit fired at such indignity! I thought a life passed in opposition to such tyranny were too short a vengeance, and I knelt me down beside that blackened hearth, and swore myself its enemy to the death.

CHAPTER VI.

MY EDUCATION.

As I thought over the various incidents the last few days of my life had presented, I began to wonder with myself whether the world always went on thus; and if the same scenes of misery and woe I had witnessed were in the ordinary course of nature. The work of years seemed to me to have been accomplished in a few brief hours. Here, where I stood but yesterday, a happy family were met together; and now, death and misfortune had laid waste the spot; and, save the cold walls, nothing marked it as a human habitation. What had become of them? Where had they gone to? Had they fled from the blood-stained hands of the cruel soldiery, or were they led away to prison? These were the questions constantly recurring to my mind. And the French officer, too—what of him? I felt the deepest interest in his fate. Poor fellow! he looked so pale and sickly; and yet there was something both bold and manly in his flashing eye and compressed lip. He was doubtless one of those Darby alluded to. What a lot was his; and how little did my own sorrows seem, as I compared them with his houseless, friendless condition! As my thoughts thus wandered on, a dark shadow fell across the gleam of moonlight that lit up the ruined cabin. I turned suddenly, and saw the figure of a man leaning against the door-post. For a second or two fear was uppermost in my mind, but rallying soon, I called out, "Who's there?"

"'Tis me, Darby M'Keown," said a well-known voice, but in a tone of deepest sorrow. "I came over to have a look at the ould walls once more."

"You heard it all, then, Darby?"

"Yes. They wor bringing the prisoners into Athlone as I left the town; and I thought to myself you'd maybe be hiding somewhere hereabouts. Is the Captain away—is he safe?"

“The French officer—yes—he escaped early in the business. I know he must be far off by this time. Heaven knows which way though.”

“Maybe I could guess,” said Darby, quietly. “Well, well, it’s hard to know what’s best. Sometimes it would seem the will of God that we aren’t to succeed; and, if we hadn’t right on our side, it would not be easy to bear up against such misfortunes as these.”

There was a silence on both sides after these words, during which I pondered them well in my mind.

“Come, Master Tom,” said Darby, suddenly; “’tis time we were moving. You’re not safe here no more nor others. Basset is looking for you everywhere, and you’ll have to leave the neighbourhood, for a while, at least. Your friend, the Captain, too, is gone; his regiment marched yesterday; so now make up your mind what to do.”

“That’s easily done, Darby,” said I, attempting to seem at ease; “whichever is your road shall be mine, if you let me.”

“Let you—yes, with a hearty welcome, too, my darling; but the first thing is to get you some clothes that won’t discover on you. Here’s a hat I squeezed into my own that’ll just fit you, and I’ve a coat here that’s about your size—that’s enough for the present, and as we go along I’ll teach you your part, how you are to behave, and he’ll be no fool that’ll find you out after ten days or a fortnight.”

My change of costume was soon effected, and my wound, which turned out to be a trifling one, looked after; I took a farewell look at the old walls, and stepped after my companion, down the boreen.

“If we make haste,” said Darby, “we’ll be beyond Shannon harbour before day; and then, when we’re on the canal, we’ll easy get a lift in some of the boats going to Dublin.”

“And are you for Dublin?” inquired I, eagerly.

“Yes. I’m to be there on the twenty-fourth of this month, please God. There’s a meeting of the friends of Ireland to be then, and some resolutions will be taken about what’s to be done. There’s bad work going on in the Parliament.”

“Indeed, Darby! what is it?”

"Oh! you couldn't understand it well; but it's just as if we warn't to have anything to say to governing ourselves, only to be made slaves of, and sent abroad to fight for the English, that always hate us and abuse us."

"And are we going to bear with this?" cried I, passionately.

"No," said Darby, laying his hand on my shoulder—"no, not at least if we had twenty thousand like you, my brave boy. But you'll hear everything yourself soon; and now, let me attend to your education a bit, for we're not out of the enemy's country."

Darby now commenced his code of instruction to me, by which I learned that I was to perform a species of second to him in all minstrelsy—not exactly on the truest principles of harmony, but merely alternating with him in the verses of his songs. These, which were entirely of his own composition, were all to be learned, and orally, too, for Mister M'Keown was too jealous of his copyright ever to commit them to writing, and especially charged me never to repeat any lyric in the same neighbourhood.

"It's not only the robbery I care for," quoth Darby, "but the varmint's desthroys my poethry completely—sometimes changing the words, injuring the sentiments, and even altering the tune. Now it's only last Tuesday I heerd 'Behave politely,' to the tune of 'Look how he sarved me.'"

Besides the musical portion of my education, there was another scarcely less difficult to be attended to: this was, the skilful adaptation of our melodies not only to the prevailing tastes of the company, but to their political and party bearings—Darby supplying me with various hints how I was to discover at a moment the peculiar bias of any stranger's politics.

"The boys," said Darby, thereby meaning his own party, "does be always sly and careful, and begin by asking, maybe for 'Do you incline?' or 'Crows in the barley,' or the like. Then they'll say, 'Have you anything new, Mister M'Keown, from up the country?' 'Something sweet, is it?' says I. 'Ay, or sour, av ye have it,' they'll say. 'Maybe ye'd like "Vinegar-hill," then,' says I. Arrah, you'd see their faces redden up with delight, and how they'll beat time to every stroke of the tune—it's a plea-

sure to play for them. But the yeos (meaning the yeomen) will call out mightily—‘Piper—holloa there, piper, I say—rise The Boyne water, or Croppies lie down.’”

“And, of course, you refuse, Darby?”

“Refuse—refuse, is it—and get a bayonet in me? Devil a bit, my dear. I’ll play it up with all the spirit I can; and nod my head to the tune, and beat the time with my heel and toe; and, maybe, if I see need of it, I fasten this to the end of the chanter, and that does the business entirely.”

Here Darby took from the lining of his hat a bunch of orange ribbon, whose faded glories showed it had done long and active service in the cause of loyalty.

I confess Darby’s influence over me did not gain any accession of power by this honest avowal of his political expediency; and the bold assertion of a nation’s wrongs, by which at first he won over my enthusiasm, seemed sadly at variance with this truckling policy. He was quick-sighted enough to perceive what was passing in my mind, and at once remarked,—

“’Tis a hard part we’re obliged to play, Master Tom, but one comfort we have—it’s only a short time we’ll need it. You know the song?”

Here he broke into the popular tune of the day:—

“ ‘And the French will come again,
Says the Shan van vaugh,
And they’ll bring ten thousand men,
Says the Shan van vaugh,
And, with powder and with ball,
For our rights we’ll loudly call;
Don’t you think they’ll hear us then?
Says the Shan van vaugh.’ ”

“Ye must larn that air, Master Tom; and see, now, the yeos is as fond of it as the boys, only remember to put their own words to it; and devil a harm in that same when one’s not in earnest. See, now, I believe it’s a natural pleasure for an Irishman to be humbugging somebody; and, faix, when there’s nobody by, he’d rather be taking a rise out of himself than doing nothing. It’s the way that’s in us, God help us! Sure it’s that same makes us sich

favourites with the ladies, and gives us a kind of native genius for coortin' :—

“ ‘Tis the look of his eye,
 And a way he can sigh
 Makes Paddy a darlin' wherever he goes ;
 With a sugary brogue,
 Ye'd hear the rogue
 Cheat the girls before their nose.' ”

And why not ?—Don't they like to be chated, when they're sure to win after all—to win a warm heart and a stout arm to fight for them ? ”

This species of logic I give as a specimen of Mister M'Keown's power of, if not explaining away a difficulty, at least, getting out of all reach of it—an attribute almost as Irish as the cause it was employed to defend.

As we journeyed along, Darby maintained a strict reserve as to the event which had required his presence in Athlone, nor did he allude to the Mayor but passingly, observing that—

“ He didn't know how it happened that a Dublin magistrate should have come up to these parts, though, to be sure, he's a great friend of the Right Honourable.”

“ And who is he ? ” asked I.

“ The Right Honourable ! Don't you know, then ? Why, I didn't think there was a child in the county couldn't tell that. Sure, it's Denis Browne himself.”

The name seemed at once to suggest a whole flood of recollections, and Darby expatiated for hours long on the terrible power of a man, by whose hands life and death were distributed, without any aid from judge or jury—thus opening to me another chapter of the lawless tyranny to which he was directing my attention, and by which he already saw my mind was greatly influenced.

About an hour after daybreak we arrived at a small cabin, which served as a lock-house on the canal side. It needed not the cold, murky sky, nor the ceaseless pattering of the rain, to make this place look more comfortless and miserable than anything I had ever beheld. Around, for miles in extent, the country was one unbroken flat, without any trace of wood, or even a single thorn hedge, to relieve the eye. Low, marshy meadows,

where the rank flaggers and reedy grass grew tall and luxuriant, with here and there some stray patches of tillage, were girt round by vast plains of bog, cut up into every variety of trench and pit. The cabin itself, though slated and built of stone, was in bad repair, the roof broken in many places, and the window mended with pieces of board, and even straw. As we came close, Darby remarked that there was no smoke from the chimney, and that the door was fastened on the outside.

"That looks bad," said he, as he stopped short about a dozen paces from the hovel, and looked steadily at it; "they've taken him too."

"Who is it, Darby?" said I. "What did he do?"

M'Keown paid no attention to my question, but unfastening the hasp which attached the door, without any padlock, entered. The fire was yet alive on the hearth, and a small stool, drawn close to it, showed where some one had been sitting; there was nothing unusual in the appearance of the cabin; the same humble furniture and cooking utensils lying about, as were seen in any other. Darby, however, scrutinized everything most carefully, looking everywhere, and into everything, till, at last, reaching his hand above the door, he pulled out from the straw of the thatch a small piece of dirty and crumpled paper, which he opened with the greatest care and attention; and then flattening it out with his hand, began to read it over to himself, his eye flashing, and his cheek growing redder, as he pored over it. At last he broke silence with,—

"'Tis myself never doubted ye, Tim, my boy. Look at that, Master Tom—but sure, you wouldn't understand it, after all. The yeos took him up last night. 'Tis something about cutting the canal, and attacking the boat, that's again him; and he left that there—that bit of paper—to give the boys courage that he wouldn't betray them. That's the way the cause will prosper—if we'll only stick by each other. For many a time, when they take a man up, they spread it about that he's turned informer against the rest, and then the others gets careless, and don't mind whether they're taken or not."

Darby replaced the piece of paper carefully, and then, listening for a moment, exclaimed,—

"I hear the boat coming; let's wait for it outside."

While he employed himself in getting his pipes into readiness. I could not help ruminating on the strength of loyalty to each other the poor people observed amid every temptation and every seduction; how, in the midst of such misery as theirs, neither threats nor bribery seemed to influence them, was a strong testimony in favour of their truth, and to such a reasoner as I was, a no less cogent argument for the goodness of the cause that elicited such virtues.

As the boat came alongside, I remarked that the deck was without a passenger; heaps of trunks and luggage littered it the entire way; but the severity of the weather had driven every one under cover, except the steersman and the captain, who, both of them wrapped up in thick coats of frieze, seemed like huge bears standing on their hind-quarters.

"How are you, Darby?" shouted the skipper; "call out that lazy rascal to open the lock."

"I don't think he's at home, sir," said Darby, as innocently as though he knew nothing of the reason for his absence.

"Not at home!—the scoundrel, where can he be, then? Come youngster," cried he, addressing me, "take the key there, and open the lock."

Until this moment, I forgot the character which my dress and appearance assigned to me; but a look from the piper recalled me at once to recollection; and, taking up the iron key, I proceeded, under Darby's instructions, to do what I was desired, while Darby and the captain amused themselves by wondering what had become of Tim, and speculated on the immediate consequences his absence would bring down on him.

"Are you going with us, Darby?" said the captain.

"Faix, I don't know, sir," said he, as if hesitating; "av there was any gentleman that liked the pipes——"

"Yes, yes, come along, man," rejoined the skipper; "is the boy with you?—very well—come in, youngster."

We were soon under weigh again; and Darby, having arranged his instrument to his satisfaction, commenced a very spirited voluntary to announce his arrival. In an

instant the cabin-door opened, and a red-faced, coarse-looking fellow, in uniform, called out,—

“Holloa, there! is that a piper?”

“Yes, sir,” said Darby, without turning his face round, while, at the same time, he put a question, in Irish, to the skipper, who answered it with a single word.

“I say, piper, come down here!” cried the yeoman, for such he was—“come down here, and let’s have a tune!”

“I’m coming, sir,” cried Darby, standing up; and holding out his hand to me, he called out, “Tom, alannah, lead me down stairs.”

I looked up in his face, and, to my amazement, perceived that he had turned up the white of his eyes, to represent blindness, and was groping with his hand, like one deprived of sight.

As any hesitation on my part might have betrayed him at once, I took his hand, and led him along, step by step, to the cabin-door. I had barely time to perceive that all the passengers were habited in uniform, when one of them called out—

“We don’t want the young fellow; let him go back. Piper, sit down here.”

The motion for my exclusion was passed without a negative, and I closed the door, and sat down by myself among the trunks on deck.

For the remainder of the day I saw nothing of Darby; the shouts of laughter and clapping of hands below stairs occasionally informing me how successful were his efforts to amuse his company; while I had abundant time to think over my own plans, and make some resolutions for the future.



CHAPTER VII.

KEVIN-STREET.

How this long, melancholy day wore on I cannot say; to me it was as gloomy in reverie as in its own dismal aspect; the very sounds of mirth that issued from the cabin beneath grated harshly on my ear; and the merry strains of Darby's pipes and the clear notes of his rich voice seemed like treachery from one who so lately had spoken in terms of heart-breathing emotion of his countrymen and their wrongs. While, therefore, my estimation for my companion suffered, my sorrow for the cause that demanded such sacrifices deepened at every moment, and I panted with eagerness for the moment when I might take my place among the bold defenders of my country, and openly dare our oppressors to the battle. All that M'Keown had told me of English tyranny and oppression was connected in my mind with the dreadful scene I had so lately been a witness to, and for the cause of which I looked no further than an act of simple hospitality. From this I wandered on to the thought of those brave allies who had deserted their career of continental glory to share our almost hopeless fortunes here; and how I burned to know them, and learn from them something of a soldier's ardour.

Night had fallen when the fitful flashing of lamps between the tall elms that lined the banks announced our approach to the capital. There is something dreadfully depressing in the aspect of a large city to the poor, unfriended youth, who, without house or home, is starting upon his life's journey. The stir, the movement, the onward tide of population, intent on pleasure or business, are things in which he has no part. The appearance of wealth humiliates, while the sight of poverty affrights him; and, while every one is animated by some purpose, he alone seems like a waif thrown on the shores of life,

unclaimed, unlooked for. Thus did I feel among that busy crowd who now pressed to the deck, gathering together their luggage, and preparing for departure. Some home awaited each of these—some hearth, some happy faces to greet their coming; but I had none of these. This was a sorrowful thought; and as I brooded over it, my head sank upon my knees, and I saw nothing of what was going forward about me.

“Tom,” whispered a low voice in my ear—“Master Tom, don’t delay, my dear; let us slip out here. The soldiers want me to go with them to their billets, and I have promised; but I don’t mean to do it.”

I looked up. It was Darby, buttoned up in his coat, his pipes unfastened for the convenience of carriage.

“Slip out after me at the lock here. It’s so dark, we’ll never be seen.”

Keeping my eye on him, I elbowed my way through the crowded deck, and sprang out just as the boat began her forward movement.

“Here we are, all safe,” said Darby, patting me on the shoulder; “and now that I’ve time to ask you, did you get your dinner, my child?”

“Oh, yes; the captain brought me something to eat.”

“Come that’s right, anyhow. Glory be to God! I ate heartily of some bacon and greens; though the blackguards—bad luck to them for the same!—made me eat an orange-lily whole, afraid the *greens*, as they said, might injure me.”

“I wonder, Darby,” said I, “that you haven’t more firmness than to change this way at every moment.”

“Firmness, is it? Faith, it’s firm enough I’d be, and stiff too, if I didn’t. Sure it’s the only way now at all. Wait, my honey, till the time comes round for ourselves, and, faith, you’ll never accuse me of coorting their favour; but now, at this moment, you perceive, we must do it to learn their plans. What do you think I got to-night? I learned all the signs the yeos have when they’re drinking together, and what they say at each sign. There’s a way they have of gripping the two little fingers together that I’ll not forget soon.”

For some time we walked on at a rapid pace, without exchanging more than an occasional word. At last we

entered a narrow, ill-lighted street, which led from the canal harbour to one of the larger and wider thoroughfares.

"I almost forget the way here," said Darby, stopping and looking about him. At last, unable to solve the difficulty, he leaned over the half-door of a shop, and called out to a man within, "Can you tell where is Kevin Street?"

"No. 39?" said the man, after looking at him steadily for a moment.

Darby stroked down one side of his face with his hand slowly, a gesture immediately imitated by the other man.

"What do you know?" said Darby.

"I know 'U.," replied the man.

"And what more?"

"I know 'N.'"

"That 'ill do," said Darby, shaking hands with him cordially. "Now, tell me the way, for I have no time to spare."

"Begorra! you're in as great haste as if ye were Darby the Blast himself. Ye'll come in and take a glass?"

Darby only laughed; and again excusing himself, he asked the way, which having learned, he wished his newly-made friend good-night, and we proceeded.

"They know you well, hereabouts, by name, at least," said I, when we had walked on a little.

"That they do," said Darby, proudly. "From Wexford to Belfast there's few doesn't know me; and they'll know more of me, av I'm right, before I die."

This he spoke with more of determination than I ever heard him use previously.

"Here's the street, now. There's the lamp—that one with the two burners there. Faix, we've made good track since morning, anyhow."

As he spoke we entered a narrow passage, through which the street-lamp threw a dubious half-light. This conducted us to a small paved court, crossing which we arrived at the door of a large house. Darby knocked in a peculiar manner, and the door was speedily opened by a man who whispered something, to which M'Keown made answer in the same low tone.

"I'm glad to see you again," said the man, louder, as he made way for him to pass.

I pushed forward to follow, when suddenly a strong arm was stretched across my breast, and a gruff voice asked,—

“Who are you?”

Darby stepped back, and said something in his ear; the other replied, sturdily, in the negative. And although Darby, as it appeared, used every power of persuasion he possessed, the man was inexorable. At last, when the temper of both appeared nearly giving way, Darby turned to me, and said,—

“Wait for me a moment, Tom, where you are, and I’ll come for you.”

So saying, he disappeared, and the door closed at the same time, leaving me in darkness on the outside. My patience was not severely taxed—ere five minutes the door opened, and Darby, followed by another person, appeared.

“Mr. Burke,” said this latter, with the tone of voice that at once bespoke a gentleman, “I am proud to know you.” He grasped my hand warmly as he spoke, and shook it affectionately. “I esteem it an honour to be your sponsor here. Can you find your way after me? This place is never lighted; but I trust you’ll know it better ere long.”

Muttering some words of acknowledgment, I followed my unseen acquaintance along the dark corridor.

“There’s a step, here,” cried he, “and now mind the stairs.”

A long and winding flight conducted us to a landing, where a candle was burning in a tin sconce. Here my conductor turned round.

“Your christian name is Thomas, I believe,” said he; at the same moment, as the light fell on me, he started suddenly back, with an air of mingled astonishment and chagrin. “Why, M’Keown, you told me——” The rest of the sentence was lost in a whisper.

“It’s a disguise I made him wear,” said Darby; “he’d no chance of escaping the country without it.”

“I’m not speaking of that,” retorted the other, angrily. “It is his age, I mean—he’s only a boy. How old are you, sir?” continued he, addressing me, but with far less courtesy than before.

“Old enough to live for my country, or die for it either, if need be,” said I, haughtily.

"Bravo, my darling," cried the piper, slapping me on the shoulder with enthusiasm.

"That's not exactly my question," said the stranger, smiling goodnaturely; "I want to know your age."

"I was fourteen in August," said I.

"I had rather you could say twenty," responded he, thoughtfully. "This is a sad mistake of yours, Darby. What dependence can be placed on a child like this? He's only a child after all."

"He's a child I'll go bail for with my head," said Darby.

"Your head has fully as much on it as it is fit to carry," said the other, in a tone of rebuke. "Have you told him anything of the object and intentions of this society? But of course you have revealed everything. Well, I'll not be a party to this business. Young gentleman," continued he, in a voice of earnest and impressive accent, "all I know of you is the few particulars this man has stated respecting your unfriended position, and the cruelty to which you fear to expose yourself in trusting to the guardianship of Mr. Basset. If these reasons have induced you, from recklessness and indifference, to risk your life, by association with men who are actuated by high and noble principles, then, I say, you shall not enter here. If, however, aware of the object and intentions of our union, you are desirous to aid us, young though you be, I shall not refuse you."

"That's it," interrupted Darby, "if you feel in your heart a friend to your country——"

"Silence!" said the other, harshly; "let him decide for himself."

"I neither know your intentions, nor even guess at them," said I, frankly. "My destitution, and the poor prospect before me, make me, as you suppose, indifferent to what I embark in, provided that it be not dishonourable. It is not danger that will deter me, that's all I can promise you."

"I see," said the stranger, "this is but another of your pranks, Mr. M'Keown. The young gentleman was to be kidnapped amongst us. One thing," said he, turning to me, "I feel assured of, that anything you have witnessed here is safe within your keeping, and now we'll not press

the matter further ; in a few days you can hear, and make up your mind on all these things, and, as you are not otherwise provided, let us make you our guest in the mean while."

Without giving me time to reply, he led me down stairs again, and, unlocking a room on the second floor, passed through several rooms, until he reached one comfortably fitted up like a study.

"You must be satisfied with a sofa here for to-night, but to-morrow I will make you more comfortable."

I threw my eyes over the well-filled bookshelf with delight, and was preparing to thank him for all his kindness to me, when he added,—

"I must leave you now, but we'll meet to-morrow ; so good night. Come along, M'Keown, we shall want you presently."

I would gladly have detained Darby to interrogate him about my new abode and its inhabitants, but he was obliged to obey, and I heard the door locked, as they closed it, on the outside ; and shortly after the sounds of their feet died away, and I was left in silence.

Determined to con over, and, if possible, explain to myself the mystery of my position, I drew my sofa towards the fire and sat down, but fatigue, stronger than all my curiosity, had the mastery, and I was soon sound asleep.



CHAPTER VIII.

NO. 39, AND ITS FREQUENTERS.

WHEN my eyes opened the following morning, it was quite pardonable in me if I believed I was still dreaming. The room, which I had scarcely time to look at the previous evening, now appeared handsomely, almost richly furnished. Books in handsome bindings covered the shelves, prints in gilded frames occupied the walls, and a large mirror filled the space above the chimney. Various little articles of taste, in bronze and marble, were scattered about, and a silver tea equipage, of antique pattern, graced a small table near the fire. A pair of splendidly mounted pistols hung at one side of the chimney glass, and a gorgeously gilt sabre occupied the other.

While I took a patient survey of all these, and was deliberately examining myself as to how and when I had first made their acquaintance, a voice from an adjoining room, the door of which lay open, exclaimed,—

"*Sacristi! quel mauvais temps!*" and then broke out into a little French air, to which, after a minute, the singer appeared to move, in a kind of dancing measure. "*Oui, c'est ça!*" exclaimed he, in rapture, as he whirled round in a pirouette, overturning a dressing-table and its contents with a tremendous crash upon the floor.

I started up, and without thinking of what I was doing, rushed in.

"*Ha! bon jour,*" said he, gaily, stretching out two fingers of a hand almost concealed beneath a mass of rings; and then suddenly changing to English, which he spoke perfectly, saving with a foreign accent, "How did you sleep? I suppose the *tintamarre* awoke you."

I hastened to apologize for my intrusion, which he stopped at once by asking if I had passed a comfortable night, and had a great appetite for breakfast.

Assuring him of both facts, I retreated into the sitting-

room, where he followed me, laughing heartily at his mishap, which he confessed he had not patience to remedy. "And what's worse," added he. "I have no servant. But here's some tea and coffee—let us chat while we eat."

I drew over my chair at his invitation, and found myself, before half an hour went by, acted on by that strange magnetism which certain individuals possess, to detail to my new friend the principal events of my simple story, down to the very moment in which we sat opposite to each other. He listened to me with the greatest attention, occasionally interposing a question, or asking an explanation of something which he did not perfectly comprehend; and when I concluded, he paused for some minutes, and then, with a slight laugh, said,—

"You don't know how you disappointed the people here. Your travelling companion had given them to understand that you were some other Burke, whose alliance they have been long desiring. In fact, they were certain of it; but," said he, starting up hastily, "it is far better as it is. I suspect, my young friend, the way in which you have been entrapped. Don't fear, we are perfectly safe here. I know all the hackneyed declamations about wrongs and slavery that are in vogue, and I know, too, how timidly they shrink from every enterprise by which their cause might be honourably, boldly asserted. I am myself another victim to the assumed patriotism of this party. I came over here two years since to take the command. A command—but in what an army! An undisciplined rabble, without arms, without officers, without even clothes—their only notion of warfare a midnight murder, or a reckless and indiscriminate slaughter. The result could not be doubtful—utter defeat and discomfiture. My countrymen, disgusted at the scenes they witnessed, and ashamed of such *confrérie*, accepted the amnesty, and returned to France. I——"

Here he hesitated, and blushed slightly; after which he resumed:—

"I yielded to a credulity for which there was neither reason nor excuse. I remained. Promises were made me, oaths were sworn, statements were produced to show how complete the organization of the insurgents really

was, and to what purpose it might be turned. I drew up a plan of a campaign, corresponded with the different leaders, encouraged the wavering, restrained the headstrong, confirmed the hesitating, and, in fact, for fourteen months held them together, not only against their opponents, but their own more dangerous disunion; and the end is—what think you? I only learned it yesterday, on my return from an excursion in the west, which nearly cost me my life. I was concealed in a cabin in woman's clothes——”

“ At Malone's, in the Glen? ”

“ Yes; how did you know that? ”

“ I was there. I saw you captured, and witnessed your escape.”

“ *Diantre!* How near it was! ”

He paused for a second, and I took the opportunity to recount to him the dreadful issue of the scene, with the burning of the cabin. He grew sickly pale as I related the circumstance: then flushing as quickly, he exclaimed—

“ We must look to this; these people must be taken care of. I'll speak to Dalton—you know him? ”

“ No; I know not one here.”

“ It was he who met you last night; he is a noble fellow. But stay, there's a knock at the door.”

He approached the fireplace, and taking down the pistols which hung beside it, walked slowly towards the door.

“ 'Tis Darby, sir—Darby the Blast, coming to speak a word to Mister Burke,” said a voice from without.

The door was opened at once, and Darby entered. Making a deep reverence to the French officer, in whose presence he seemed by no means at his ease, Darby dropped his voice to its most humble cadence, and said,—

“ Might I be so bold as to have a word with ye, Master Tom? ”

There was something in the way this request was made that seemed to imply a desire for secrecy—so, at least, the Frenchman understood it—and turning hastily round, he said,—

“ Yes, to be sure; I'll go into my dressing-room; there is nothing to prevent your speaking here.”

No sooner was the door closed, than Darby drew a chair close to me, and bending down his head, whispered,—

“Don't trust him—not from here to that window; they're going to do it without him—Mahony told me so himself: but my name was not drawn, and I'm to be off to Kildare this evening. There's a meeting of the boys at the Curragh, and I want you to come with me.”

The state of doubt and uncertainty which had harassed my mind for the last twenty-four hours was no longer tolerable; so I boldly asked M'Keown for an explanation as to the people in whose house I was, their objects and plans, and how far I was myself involved in their designs.

In fewer words than I could convey it, Darby informed me that the house was the meeting-place of the United Irishmen, who still cherished the hope of reviving the scenes of '98; that, conscious the failure before was attributable to their having taken the field as an army when they should have merely contented themselves with secret and indirect attacks, they had resolved to adopt a different tactique. It was, in fact, determined that every political opponent to their party should be marked—himself, his family, and his property; that no opportunity was to be lost of injuring him or his, and, if need be, of taking away his life; that various measures were to be propounded to Parliament by their friends, to the maintenance of which threats were to be freely used to the Government members; and, with respect to the great measure of the day—the Union—it was decided that on the night of the division a certain number of people should occupy the gallery above the ministerial benches, armed with hand-grenades and other destructive missiles; that, on a signal given, these were to be thrown amongst them, scattering death and ruin on all sides.

“It will be seen, then,” said Darby, with a fiendish grin, “how the enemies of Ireland pay for their hatred of her. Maybe they'll vote away their country after that!”

Whether it was the tone, the look, or the words that suddenly awoke me from my dreamy infatuation, I know not; but coming so soon after the Frenchmen's detail of the barbarism of the party, a thorough disgust seized me, and the atrocity of this wholesale murder lost nothing of its blackness from being linked with the cause of liberty.

With ready quickness Darby saw what my impression was, and hastily remarked,—

"We'll be all away out of this, Master Tom, you know, before that. We'll be up in Kildare, where we'll see the boys exercising and marching; that's what 'ill do your heart good to look at. But, before we go, you'll have to take the oath; for I'm answerable for you all this time with my own head: not that I care for that same, but others might mistrust ye."

"Holloa!" cried the Frenchman, from within, "I hope you have finished your conference there; for you seem to forget there's no fire in this room."

"Yes, sir; and I beg a thousand pardons," said Darby, servilely: "and Master Tom only wants to bid you good-bye before he goes."

"Goes! goes where? Are you so soon tired of me?" said he, in an accent of most winning sweetness.

"He's obliged to be at the Curragh, at the meeting there," said Darby answering for me.

"What meeting? I never heard of it."

"It's a review, sir, of the throops, that's to be by moonlight."

"A review!" said the Frenchman, with a scornful laugh. "And do you call this midnight assembly of marauding savages a review?"

Darby's face grew dark with rage, and for a second I thought he would have sprung on his assailant, but with a fawning, shrewd smile he lisped out,—

"It's what they call it, Captain; sure the poor boys knows no better."

"Are you going to this *review*?" said the Frenchman, with an ironical pronunciation of the word.

"I scarce know where to go, or what to do," said I, in a tone of despairing sadness; "any certainty would be preferable to the doubts that harass me."

"Stay with me," said the Frenchman, interrupting me, and laying his hand on my shoulder; "we shall be companions to each other; your friend here knows I can teach you many things that may be useful to you hereafter, and perhaps, with all humility I may say, your stay will be as profitable as at the *camp* yonder."

"I should not like to desert one who has been so kind to me as Darby, and if he wishes——"

Before I could finish my sentence, the door was opened by a key from without, and Dalton, as he was called, stood amongst us.

"What, Darby!" said he, in a voice of something like emotion, "not gone yet! you know I forbid you coming up here; I suspected what you would be at. Come, lose no more time, we'll take care of Mr. Burke for you."

Darby hung his head sorrowfully and left the room without speaking, followed by Dalton, whose voice I heard in a tone of anger, as he descended the stairs.

There was a certain openness, an easy air of careless freedom in the young Frenchman, which made me feel at home in his company almost the very moment of our acquaintance; and when he asked some questions about myself and my family, I hesitated not to tell him my entire history, with the causes which had first brought me into Darby's society, and led me to imbibe his doctrines and opinions. He paused when I finished, and, after reflecting for some minutes, he looked me gravely in the face, and said,—

"But you are aware of the place you are now in?"

"No," said I; "further than the fact of my having enjoyed a capital night's rest and eaten an excellent breakfast, I know nothing about it."

A hearty burst of laughter from my companion followed this very candid acknowledgment on my part.

"Then, may I ask, what are your intentions for the future?—have you any?"

"At least one hundred," said I, smiling; "but every one of them has about as many objections against it. I should like much, for instance, to be a soldier—not in the English service though. I should like to belong to an army where neither birth nor fortune can make nor mar a man's career. I should like, too, to be engaged in some great war of liberty, where with each victory we gained the voices of a liberated people would fall in blessings upon us; and then I should like to raise myself to high command by some great achievement."

"And then," said the Frenchman, interrupting, "to

come back to Ireland, and cut off the head of this terrible Monsieur Basset. *N'est-ce pas, Tom?*"

I could not help joining in his laugh against myself, although in good truth I had felt better pleased if he had taken up my enthusiasm in a different mood.

"So much for mere dreaming," said I, with half a sigh, as our laughter subsided.

"Not so," said he, quickly—"not so; all you said is far more attainable than you suspect. I have been in such a service myself—I won my 'grade' as officer at the point of my sword, when scarcely your age; and before I was fifteen received this."

He took down the sword that hung over the chimney as he said these words, and drawing it from the scabbard, pointed to the inscription which, in letters of gold, adorned the blade—"Rivoli," "Arcole;" then turning the reverse, I read—"Au Lieutenant Charles Gustave de Meudon, 3me Cuirassiers."

"This, then, is your name?" said I, repeating it half aloud.

"Yes," replied he, as he drew himself up, and seemed struggling to repress a feeling of pride that sent the blood rushing to his cheek and brow.

"How I should like to be you!" was the wish that burst from me at that moment, and which I could not help uttering in words.

"*Hélas, non!*" said the Frenchman, sorrowfully, and turning away to conceal his agitation. "I have broken with fortune many a day since."

The tone of bitter disappointment in which these words were spoken left no room for reply, and we were both silent.

Charles—for so I must now call him to my reader, as he compelled me to do so with himself—Charles was the first to speak.

"Not many months ago my thoughts were very like your own; but since then how many disappointments—how many reverses!"

He walked hurriedly up and down the room as he said this; then, stopping suddenly before me, laid his hand on my shoulder, and, with a voice of impressive earnestness, said,—

“Be advised by me—join not with these people; do not embark with them in their enterprise. Their enterprise!” repeated he, scornfully: “they have none. The only men of action here are they with whom no man of honour, no soldier could associate—their only daring some deed of rapine and murder. No, liberty is not to be achieved by such hands as these; and the other—the men of political wisdom, who prate about reform and the people’s rights, who would gladly see such as me adventure in the cause they do not care themselves to advocate—they are all false alike. Give me,” cried he, with energy, and stamping his foot upon the ground, “give me a demi-brigade of ours, some squadrons of Milhaud’s cavalry, and ‘*trois bouches à feu,*’ to open the way before us. But why do I speak of this? Some midnight burning, some savage murder, some cowardly attack on unarmed and defenceless people—these are our campaigns here; and shall I stain this blade in such a conflict?”

“But you will go back to France?” said I, endeavouring to say something that might rally him from his gloom.

“Never,” replied he, firmly—“never. I alone, of all my countrymen, maintained, that to leave the people here at such a crisis was unfair and unmanly. I alone believed in the representations that were made of extended organization, of high hopes, and ardent expectations. I accepted the command of their army—their army! what a mockery! When others accepted the amnesty, I refused, and lived in concealment, my life hanging upon the chance of being captured; for fourteen months I have wandered from county to county, endeavouring to rally the spirit I had been taught to think only needed restraint to hold back its impetuous daring. I have spent money largely, for it was largely placed at my disposal; I have distributed places and promises; I have accepted every post where danger offered; and in return, I hoped that the hour was approaching when we should test the courage of our enemies by such an outbreak as would astonish Europe—and what think you has all ended in? But my cheek burns at the very thought—an intended attack on the Government Members of Parliament—an act of base assassination—a cowardly murder; and for what, too? to prevent a political union with England! Have they forgot-

ten that our cause was total rupture ! independence ! open enmity with England ! But, *c'est fini*, I have given them my last resolve. Yesterday evening I told the delegates the only chance that, in my opinion, existed of their successfully asserting their own independence. I gave them the letters of French officers, high in command and station, concurring with my own views ; and I have pledged myself to wait one month longer, if they deem my plans worthy of acceptance, to consider all the details, and arrange the mode of proceeding. If they refuse, then I leave Ireland for ever within a week. In America, the cause I glory in is still triumphant ; and there, no prestige of failure shall follow me to damp my own efforts, nor discourage the high hopes of such as trust me. But you, my poor boy—and how have I forgotten you in all this sad history—I will not suffer you to be misled by false representations and flattering offers. It may be the only consolation I shall carry with me from this land of anarchy and misfortune—but even that is something—if I rescue one untried and uncorrupted heart from the misery of such associates. You shall be a soldier—be my companion here while I stay ! I'll arrange everything for your comfort ; we'll read and talk together ; and I will endeavour to repay the debt I owe to France, by sending back there one better than myself to guard her eagles."

The tears ran fast down my cheeks as I heard these words, but not one syllable could I utter.

" You do not like my plan ; well——"

Before he could conclude, I seized his hand with rapture within both of mine, and pressed it to my lips.

" It is a bargain, then," said he, gaily ; " and now let us lose no more time ; let us remove this breakfast-table, and begin at once."

Another table was soon drawn over to the fire, upon which a mass of books, maps, and plates were heaped by my companion, who seemed to act in the whole affair with all the delight of a schoolboy in some exploit of amusement.

" You are aware, Tom, that this place is a prison to me, and, therefore, I am not altogether disinterested in this proposal. You, however, can go out when you please ; but until you understand the precautions necessary to

prevent you from being traced here, it is better not to venture into the city."

"I have no wish whatever to leave this," said I, quickly, while I ranged my eye with delight over the pile of books before me, and thought of all the pleasure I was to draw from their perusal.

"You must tell me so three weeks hence, if you wish to flatter me," replied Charles, as he drew over his chair, and pointed with his hand to another.

It needed not the pleasing and attractive power of my teacher to make my study the most captivating of all amusements. Military science, even in its gravest forms, had an interest for me such as no other pursuit could equal. In its vast range of collateral subjects, it opened an inexhaustible mine to stimulate industry and encourage research. The great wars of the world were the great episodes in history, wherein monarchs and princes were nothing, if not generals. With what delight, then, did I hang over the pages of Carnot and Jomini; with what an anxious heart would I read the narrative of a siege, where, against every disadvantage of numbers and munitions of war, some few resisted all the attacks of the adverse forces, with no other protection save that of consummate skill. With what enthusiasm did I hear of Charles XII., of Wallenstein, of the Prince Eugene; and how oftentimes did I ask myself in secret, why had the world none such as these to boast of now? till at last the name of Bonaparte burst from my companion's lips, as, with a torrent of long-restrained devotion, he broke forth into an eloquent and impassioned account of the great general of his age.

That name once heard, I could not bear to think or speak of any other. How I followed him, from the siege of Toulon, as he knelt down beside the gun which he pointed with his own hand, to the glorious battle-fields of Italy, and heard, from one who listened to his shout of "Suivez-moi" on the bridge of Lodi, the glorious heroism of that day! I tracked him across the pathless deserts of the East, beneath the shadow of the Pyramids, whose fame seems, somehow, to have revived in the history of that great man; and then I listened to the stories—and how numerous were they!—of his personal daring, the

devotion and love men bore him, the magic influence of his presence, the command of his look; the very short and broken sentences he addressed to his generals were treasured up in my mind and repeated over and over to myself. Charles possessed a miniature of the First Consul, which he assured me was strikingly like him, and for hours long I could sit and gaze upon that cold, unimpassioned brow, where greatness seemed to sit enthroned. How I longed to look upon the broad and massive forehead—the deep-set, searching eye—the mouth, where sweetness and severity seemed tempered—and that finely rounded chin, that gave his head so much the character of antique beauty. His image filled every avenue of my brain; his eye seemed on me in my waking moments, and I thought I heard his voice in my dream. Never did lover dwell more rapturously on the memory of his mistress than did my boyish thoughts on Bonaparte. What would I not have done to serve him? What would I not have dared to win one word, one look of his, in praise? All other names faded away before his; the halo around him paled every other star; the victories I had thought of before with admiration I now only regarded as trifling successes, compared with the overwhelming torrent of *his* conquests. Charles saw my enthusiasm, and ministered to it with eager delight. Every trait in his beloved leader that could stimulate admiration, or excite affection, he dwelt on with all the fondness of a Frenchman for his idol, till at last the world seemed to my eyes but the theatre of his greatness, and men the mere instruments of that commanding intellect that ruled the destinies and disposed of the fortunes of nations.

In this way days, and weeks, and even months rolled on, for Charles's interest in my studies had induced him to abandon his former intention of departure, and he now scarcely took any part in the proceedings of the delegates, and devoted himself almost exclusively to me. During the day-time we never left the house, but when night fell we used to walk forth—not into the city, but by some country road, often along the canal-side—our conversation on the only topic wherein we felt interested; and these rambles still live within my memory with all the vivid freshness of yesterday; and while my heart

saddens over the influence they shed upon my after life, I cannot help the train of pleasure with which, even yet, I dwell upon their recollection. How guarded should he be who converses with a boy, forgetting with what power each word is fraught, by the mere force of years; how the flattery of equality destroys judgment, and saps all power of discrimination; and, more than all, how dangerous it is to graft upon the tender sapling the ripe fruits of experience, not knowing how, in such, they may grow to very rankness. Few are there who cannot look back to their childhood for the origin of opinions that have had their influence over all their latter years; and when these have owed their birth to those we loved, is it wonderful that we should cling to faults which seemed hallowed by friendship?

Meanwhile, I was becoming a man, if not in years, at least in spirit and ambition. The pursuits natural to my age were passed over for the studies of more advanced years. Military history had imparted to me a soldier's valour, and I could take no pleasure in anything save as it bore upon the one engrossing topic of my mind.

Charles, too, seemed to feel all his own ambition revived in mine, and watched with pride the progress I was making under his guidance.



CHAPTER IX.

THE FRENCHMAN'S STORY.

WHILE my life slipped thus pleasantly along, the hopes of the insurgent party fell daily and hourly lower; disunion and distrust pervaded all their councils, jealousies and suspicions grew up among their leaders. Many of those whose credit stood highest in their party became informers to the Government, whose persevering activity increased with every emergency; and finally, they who would have adventured everything but some few months before, grew lukewarm and indifferent. A dogged carelessness seemed to have succeeded to their outbreak of enthusiasm, and they looked on at the execution of their companions, and the wreck of their party, with a stupid and stolid indifference.

For sometime previous the delegates met at rare and irregular intervals, and finally ceased to assemble altogether. The bolder portion of the body, disgusted with the weak and temporizing views of the others, withdrew first; and the less determined formed themselves into a new society, whose object was merely to get up petitions and addresses unfavourable to the great project of the Government—a legislative union with England.

From the turn events had taken, my companion, as it may be supposed, took no interest in their proceedings. Affecting to think that all was not lost—while in his heart he felt bitterly the disappointment of his hopes—a settled melancholy, unrelieved even by those flashes of buoyancy which a Frenchman rarely loses in any misfortune, now grew upon him. His cheek grew paler, and his frame seemed wasting away, while his impaired strength and tottering step betrayed that something more than sorrow was at work within him. Still he persevered in our course of study, and, notwithstanding all my efforts to induce him to relax in his labours, his desire to teach me grew with every day. For some time, a short, hacking cough, with

pain in his chest, had seized on him, and, although it yielded to slight remedies, it returned again and again. Our night walks were, therefore, obliged to be discontinued, and the confinement to the house preyed upon his spirits, and shook his nerves. Boy as I was, I could not look upon his altered face and attenuated figure without a thrilling fear at my heart lest he might be seriously ill. He perceived my anxiety quickly, and endeavoured, with many a cheering speech, to assure me that these were attacks to which he had been long accustomed, and which never were either lasting or dangerous; but the very hollow accents in which he spoke robbed these words of all their comfort to me.

The winter, which had been unusually long and severe, at length passed away, and the spring, milder and more genial than is customary in our climate, succeeded; the sunlight came slanting down through the narrow court, and fell in one rich yellow patch upon the floor. Charles started, his dark eyes, hollow and sunk, glowed with unwonted brightness, and his haggard and hollow cheek suddenly flushed with a crimson glow.

"Mon cher," said he, in a voice tremulous with emotion, "I think if I were to leave this I might recover."

The very possibility of his death, until that moment, had never even crossed my mind, and in the misery of the thought I burst into tears. From that hour the impression never left my mind, and every accent of his low, soft voice, every glance of his mild, dark eye, sank into my heart, as though I heard and saw them for the last time. There was nothing to fear now, so far as political causes were concerned, in our removing from our present abode, and it was arranged between us that we should leave town, and take up our residence in the county of Wicklow. There was a small cottage at the opening of Glenmalure which my companion constantly spoke of; he had passed two nights there already, and left it with many a resolve to return and enjoy the delightful scenery of the neighbourhood.

The month of April was drawing to a close, when one morning, soon after sunrise, we left Dublin. A heavy mist, such as often in northern climates ushers in a day of unusual brightness, shrouded every object from our view

for several miles of the way. Charles scarcely spoke; the increased exertion seemed to have fatigued and exhausted him, and he lay back in the carriage, his handkerchief pressed to his mouth, and his eyes half closed.

We had passed the little town of Bray, and entered upon that long road which traverses the valley between the two Sugar Loaves, when suddenly the sun burst forth; the lazy mists rolled heavily up the valley and along the mountain sides, disclosing as they went patches of fertile richness, or dark masses of frowning rock. Above this, again, the purple heath appeared glowing, like a gorgeous amethyst, as the red sunlight played upon it, or sparkled on the shining granite that rose through the luxuriant herbage. Gradually the ravine grew narrower; the mountains seemed like one vast chain, severed by some great convulsion; their rugged sides appeared to mark the very junction; trunks of aged and mighty trees hung threateningly above the pass; and a hollow echoing sound arose, as the horses trod along the causeway. It was a spot of wild and gloomy grandeur, and as I gazed on it intently, suddenly I felt a hand upon my shoulder. I turned round: it was Charles's, his eyes riveted on the scene, his lips parted with eagerness; he spoke at length, but at first his voice was hoarse and low, by degrees it grew fuller and richer, and at last rolled on, in all its wonted strength and roundness.

"See there—look!" cried he, as his thin, attenuated figure pointed to the pass. "What a ravine to defend! The column, with two pieces of artillery in the road; the cavalry to form behind, where you see that open space, and advance between the open files of the infantry; the tirailleurs scattered along that ridge where the furze is thickest, or down there among those masses of rock *Sacristi!*—what a volume of fire they'd pour down. See how the blue smoke and the ring of the musket would mark them out as they dotted the mountain side, and yet were unapproachable to the enemy; and think then of the rolling thunder of the eighteen-pounders shaking these old mountains, and the long, clattering crash of the platoon following after, and the dark chakos towering above the smoke; and then the loud '*Viva!*' I think I hear it."

His cheek became purple as he spoke, his veins swollen

and distended ; his voice, though loud, lost nothing of its musical cadence, and his whole look betokened excitement, almost bordering on madness. Suddenly his chest heaved, a tremendous fit of coughing seized him, and he fell forward upon my shoulder. I lifted him up, and what was my horror to perceive that all his vest and cravat were bathed in florid blood, which issued from his mouth. He had burst a blood-vessel in his wild transport of enthusiasm, and now lay pale, cold, and senseless in my arms.

It was a long time before we could proceed with our journey, for, although fortunately the bleeding did not continue, fainting followed fainting for hours after. At length we were enabled to set out again, but only at a walking pace. For the remainder of the day his head rested on my shoulder, and his cold hand in mine, as we slowly traversed the long, weary miles towards Glenmalure.

The night was falling as we arrived at our journey's end. Here, however, every kindness and attention awaited us ; and I soon had the happiness of seeing my poor friend in his bed, and sleeping with all the ease and tranquillity of a child.

From that hour every other thought was merged in my fears for him. I watched, with an agonizing intensity, every change of his malady. I scanned, with an aching heart, every symptom day by day. How many times has the false bloom of hectic shed happiness over me. How often, in my secret walks, have I offered up my prayer of thankfulness, as the deceitful glow of fever coloured his wan cheek, and lent a more than natural brilliancy to his sunk and filmy eye. The world to me was all nothing, save as it influenced him. Every cloud that moved above, each breeze that rustled, I thought of for him ; and when I slept his image was still before me, and his voice seemed to call me oftentimes in the silence of the night, and when I awoke and saw him sleeping, I knew not which was the reality.

His debility increased rapidly ; and although the mild air of summer, and the shelter of the deep valley seemed to have relieved his cough, his weakness grew daily more and more. His character, too, seemed to have undergone a change as great and as striking as that in his health. The high and chivalrous ambition, the soldier-like heroism, the ardent spirit of patriotism that at first marked him,

had given way to a low and tender melancholy—an almost womanish tenderness—that made him love to have the little children of the cabin near him, to hear their innocent prattle, and watch their infant gambols. He talked, too, of home, of the old *château* in Provence, where he was born, and described to me its antiquated terraces and quaint, old-fashioned alleys, where as a boy he wandered with his sister.

"*Pauvre Marie!*" said he, as a deep blush covered his pale cheek, "how have I deserted you!" The thought seemed full of anguish for him, and for the remainder of the day he scarcely spoke.

Some days after his first mention of his sister, we were sitting together in front of the cabin, enjoying the shade of a large chestnut tree, which already had put forth its early leaves, and tempered, if it did not exclude, the rays of the sun.

"You heard me speak of my sister," said he, in a low and broken voice. "She is all that I have on earth near to me. We were brought up together as children; learned the same plays; had the same masters; spent not one hour in the long day asunder, and at night we pressed each other's hands, as we sunk to sleep. She was to me all that I ever dreamed of girlish loveliness, of woman's happiest nature; and I was her ideal of boyish daring, of youthful boldness, and manly enterprise. We loved each other—like those who felt they had no need of other affection, save such as sprang from our cradles, and tracked us on through life. Hers was a heart that seemed made for all that human nature can taste of happiness; her eye, her lip, her blooming cheek knew no other expression than a smile; her very step was buoyancy; her laugh rang through your heart as joy-bells fill the air; and yet! and yet! I brought that heart to sorrow, and that cheek I made pale, and hollow, and sunken as you see my own. My cursed ambition, that rested not content with my own path in life, threw its baleful shadow across hers. The story is a short one, and I may tell it to you.

"When I left Provence, to join the army of the south, I was obliged to leave Marie under the care of an old and distant relative, who resided some two leagues from us on the Loire. The chevalier was a widower, with one son

about my own age, of whom I knew nothing, save that he had never left his father's house—had been educated completely at home—and had obtained the reputation of being a sombre, retired book-worm, who avoided the world, and preferred the lonely solitude of a provincial château to the gay dissipations of Paris.

“My only fear in entrusting my poor sister in such hands was the dire stupidity of the *séjour*; but as I bid her good-bye, I said, laughingly, ‘*Prenez garde, Marie, don't fall in love with Claude de Lauzan.*’

“‘Poor Claude!’ said she, bursting into a fit of laughter; ‘what a sad affair that would be for him!’ So saying, we parted.

“I made the campaign of Italy, where, as I have perhaps too often told you, I had some opportunities of distinguishing myself, and was promoted to a squadron on the field of Arcole. Great as my boyish exultation was at my success, I believe its highest pleasure arose from the anticipation of Marie's delight when she received my letter with the news. I wrote to her nearly every week, and heard from her as frequently; at the time I did not mark, as I have since done, the altered tone of her letters to me. How gradually the high, ambitious daring that animated her early answers became tamed down into half-regretful fears of a soldier's career; her sorrows for those whose conquered countries were laid waste by fire and sword; her implied censure of a war, whose injustice she more than hinted at; and lastly, her avowed preference for those peaceful paths in life that were devoted to the happiness of one's fellows, and the worship of Him who deserved all our affection. I did not mark, I say, this change; the bustle of the camp, the din of arms, the crash of mounted squadrons, are poor aids to reflection; and I thought of Marie but as I left her.

“It was after a few months of absence I returned to Provence, the *croix d'honneur* on my bosom, the sabre I won at Lodi by my side. I rushed into the room bursting with impatience to clasp my sister in my arms, and burning to tell her all my deeds and all my dangers; she met me with her old affection, but how altered in its form! her gay and girlish lightness, the very soul of buoyant pleasure was gone; and in its place a mild, sad smile

played upon her lip, and a deep, thoughtful look was in her dark brown eye. She looked not less beautiful; no, far from it, her loveliness was increased tenfold; but the disappointment smote heavily on my heart. I looked about me like one seeking for some explanation, and there stood Claude—pale, still, and motionless—before me; the very look she wore reflected in his calm features, her very smile was on his lips. In an instant the whole truth flashed across me; she loved him. There are thoughts which rend us, as lightning does the rock, opening new surfaces that lay hid since the Creation, and tearing our fast-knit sympathies asunder like the rent granite—mine was such. From that hour I hated him; the very virtues that had, under happier circumstances, made us like brothers, but added fuel to the flame. My rival, he had robbed me of my sister—he had left me without that one great prize I owned on earth; and all that I had dared and won seemed poor, and barren, and worthless, since she no longer valued it.

“That very night I wrote a letter to the First Consul; I knew the ardent desire he possessed to attach to Josephine’s suite such members of the old aristocracy as could be induced to join it. He had more than once hinted to me that the fame of my sister’s beauty had reached the Tuileries; that with such pretensions as hers, the seclusion of a château in Provence was ill-suited to her. I stated at once my wish that she might be received as one of the ladies of the Court, avowing my intention to afford her any sum that might be deemed suitable to maintain her in so exalted a sphere. This, you are not aware, is the mode by which the members of a family express to the Consul that they surrender all right and guardianship in the individual given, tendering to him full power to dispose of her in marriage, exactly as though he were her own father.

“Before day broke my letter was on its way to Paris; in less than a week came the answer, accepting my proposal in the most flattering terms, and commanding me to repair to the Tuileries with my sister, and take command of a regiment *d’élite* then preparing for service.

“I may not dwell on the scene that followed. The very memory of it is too much for my weak and failing spirits. Claude flung himself at my feet, and confessed his love;

he declared his willingness to submit to any or everything I should dictate : he would join the army ; he would volunteer for Egypt. Poor fellow ! his trembling accents and bloodless lip comported ill with the heroism of his words. Only promise that in the end Marie should be his, and there was no danger he would not dare ; no course in life, however unsuited to him, he would not follow at my bidding. I know not whether my heart could have withstood such an appeal as this, had I been free to act ; but now the die was cast. I handed him the First Consul's letter ; he opened it with a hand trembling like palsy, and read it over ; he leaned his head against the chimney when he finished, and gave me back the letter without a word. I could not bear to look on him, and left the room.

When I returned he was gone. We left the château the same evening for Paris. Marie scarcely spoke one word during the journey ; a fatuous, stupid indifference to everything and every one had seized her, and she seemed perfectly careless whither we went. This gradually yielded to a settled melancholy, which never left her. On our arrival in Paris, I did not dare to present myself with her at the Tuileries ; so, feigning her ill-health as an excuse, I remained some weeks at Versailles, to endeavour by affection and care to overcome this sad feature of her malady. It was about six weeks after this that I read in the *Journal des Débats* an announcement that ' Claude de Lauzan had accepted holy orders, and was appointed *cure* of La Flèche, in Brittany.' At first the news came on me like a thunder-clap, but after a while's reflection I began to believe it was, perhaps, the very best thing could have happened ; and under this view of the matter I left the paper in Marie's way.

" I was right. She did not appear the next morning at breakfast nor the entire day after. The following day the same ; but in the evening came a few lines written with a pencil, saying she wished to see me. I went—but I cannot tell you. My very heart is bursting as I think of her, as she sat up in her bed—her long, dark hair falling in heavy masses over her shoulders, and her darker eyes flashing with a brightness that seemed like wandering intellect. She fell upon my neck and cried ; her tears ran down my cheek, and her sobs shook me. I

know not what I said, but I remember that she agreed to everything I had arranged for her ; she even smiled a sickly smile as I spoke of what an ornament she would be to the *belle cour*, and we parted.

"That was the last good-night I ever wished her. The next day she was received at Court, and I was ordered to Normandy, thence I was sent to Boulogne, and soon after to Ireland."

"But you have written to her—you have heard from her ?"

"Alas ! no. I have written again and again, but either she has never received my letters, or she will not answer them."

The tone of sorrow he concluded in left no room for any effort at consolation, and we were silent ; at last he took my hand in his, and as his feverish fingers pressed it, he said,—

"'Tis a sad thing when we work the misery of those for whose happiness we would have shed our heart's blood."



CHAPTER X.

THE CHURCHYARD.

THE excitement caused by the mere narration of his sister's suffering weighed heavily on De Meudon's weak and exhausted frame; his thoughts would flow in no other channel; his reveries were of home and long-past years; and a depression far greater than I had yet witnessed settled down upon his jaded spirits.

"Is not my present condition like a just retribution on my ambitious folly?" was his continued reflection: and so he felt it. With a Frenchman's belief in destiny, he regarded the failure of all his hopes, and the ruin of the cause he had embarked in, as the natural and inevitable consequences of his own ungenerous conduct; and even reproached himself for carrying his evil fortune into an enterprise which, without him, might have been successful. These gloomy forebodings, against which reason was of no avail, grew hourly upon him, and visibly influenced his chances of recovery.

It was a sad spectacle to look on one who possessed so much of good—so many fair and attractive qualities—thus wasting away without a single consolation he could lay to his bruised and wounded spirit. The very successes he once gloried to remember now only added bitterness to his fallen state; to think of what he had been, and look on what he was, was his heaviest affliction, and he fell into deep, brooding melancholy, in which he scarcely spoke, but sat looking at vacancy, waiting as it were for death.

I remember it well. I had been sitting silently by his bedside; for hours he had not spoken, but an occasional deep-drawn sigh showed he was not sleeping. It was night, and all in the little household were at rest; a slight rustling of the curtain attracted me, and I felt his hand steal from the clothes and grasp my own.

"I have been thinking of you, my dear boy," said he,

"and what is to become of you when I'm gone. There, do not sob; the time is short now, and I begin to feel it so; for, somehow, as we approach the confines of eternity, our mental vision grows clearer and more distinct—doubts that have long puzzled us seem doubts no longer. Many of our highest hopes and aspirations—the day-dreams that made life glorious—pass before our eyes, and become the poor and empty pageants of the hour. Like the traveller who, as he journeys along, sees little of the way, but at the last sits down upon some grassy bank, and gazes over the long line of road; so, as the close of life draws near, we throw a backward glance upon the past. But how differently does all seem to our eyes—how many of those we envied once do we pity now; how many of those who appeared low and humble, whose thoughts seemed bowed to earth, do we now recognize as soaring aloft, high above their fellow-men, like creatures of some other sphere!" He paused; then in a tone of greater earnestness added, "You must not join these people, Tom. The day is gone by when anything great or good could have been accomplished. The horrors of civil war will ever prevent good men from uniting themselves to a cause which has no other road save through bloodshed; and many wise ones, who weigh well the dangers, see it hopeless. France is your country—there, liberty has been won; there lives one great man, whose notice, were it but passingly bestowed, is fame. If life were spared me, I could have served you there—as it is, I can do something."

He paused for a while, and then drawing the curtain gently to one side, said,—

"Can it be moonlight, it is so very bright?"

"Yes," said I; "the moon is at the full."

He sat up as I spoke, and looked eagerly out through the little window.

"I have got a fancy—how strange, too, it is one I have often smiled at in others, but I feel it strongly now—it is to choose some spot where I shall be laid when I am dead. There is a little ruin at the bottom of this glen; you must remember it well. If I mistake not, there is a well close beside it. I remember resting there one hot and sultry day in July. It was an eventful day, too; we beat

the king's troops, and took seventy prisoners; and I rode from Arklow down here to bring up some ammunition that we had secreted in one of the lead-mines. Well I recollect falling asleep beside that well, and having such a delightful dream of home, when I was a child, and of a pony which Marie used to ride behind me, and I thought we were galloping through the vineyard, she grasping me round the waist, half laughing, half in fear; and when I awoke I could not remember where I was. I should like to see that old spot again, and I feel strong enough now to try it."

I endeavoured, with all my power of persuasion, to prevent his attempting to walk such a distance, and in the night air too; but the more I reasoned against it, the more bent was he on the project, and at last I was obliged to yield a reluctant consent, and assist him to rise and dress.

The energy which animated him at first soon sank under the effort, and before we had gone a quarter of a mile he grew faint and weary, still he persevered, and, leaning heavily on my arm, he tottered along.

"If I make no better progress," said he, smiling sadly, "there will be no need to assist me coming back."

At last we reached the ruin, which, like many of the old churches in Ireland, was a mere gable, overgrown with ivy, and pierced with a single window, whose rudely-formed arch betokened great antiquity. Vestiges of the side walls remained in part, but the inside of the building was filled with tombstones and grave-mounds, selected by the people as being a place of more than ordinary sanctity; among these the rank dock weeds and nettles grew luxuriantly, and the tall grass lay heavy and matted. We sat for some time looking on this sad spot: a few garlands were withering on some rude crosses of stick, to mark the latest of those who sought their rest there, and upon these my companion's eyes were bent with a melancholy meaning.

How long we sat there in silence I know not, but a rustling of the ivy behind me was the first thing to attract my attention. I turned quickly round, and in the window of the ruin beheld the head of a man bent eagerly in the

direction we were in; the moonlight fell upon him at the moment, and I saw that the face was blackened.

"Who's that?" I called aloud, as with my finger I directed De Mendon to the spot. No answer was returned, and I repeated my question yet louder, but still no reply, while I could mark that the head was turned slightly round, as if to speak with some one without. The noise of feet, and the low murmur of several voices, now came from the side of the ruin, at the same instant a dozen men, their faces blackened, and wearing a white badge on their hats, stood up as if out of the very ground around us.

"What are you doing here at this time of night?" said a hard voice, in tones that boded but little kindness.

"We are as free to walk the country, when we like it, as you are, I hope," was my answer.

"I know his voice well," said another of the crowd. "I told you it was them."

"Is it you that stop at Wild's, in the glen?" said the first speaker.

"Yes," replied I.

"And is it to get share of what's going that ye're come to join us now?" repeated he, in a tone of mockery.

"Be easy, Lanty—'tis the French officer that behaved so stout up at Ross: it's little he cares for money, as myself knows. I saw him throw a handful of goold among the boys when they stopped to pillage, and bid them do their work first, and that he'd give them plenty after."

"Maybe he'd do the same now," said a voice from the crowd, in a tone of irony; and the words were received by the rest with a roar of laughter.

"Stop laughing," said the first speaker, in a voice of command; "we've small time for joking." As he spoke he threw himself heavily on the bank beside De Mendon, and, placing his hand familiarly on his arm, said, in a low, but clear voice, "The boys is come up here to-night to draw lots for three men to settle Barton, that's come down here yesterday, and stopping at the barrack there. We knew you warn't well lately, and we didn't trouble you; but now that you're come up of yourself among us, it's only

fair and reasonable you'd take your chance with the rest, and draw your lot with the others."

"Arrah, he's too weak—the man is dying," said a voice near.

"And if he is," said the other, "who wants his help, sure, isn't it to keep him quiet, and not betray us?"

"The devil a fear of that," said the former speaker; "he's thrue to the backbone; I know them that knows him well."

By this time De Meudon had risen to his feet, and stood leaning upon a tall headstone beside him; his foraging cap fell off in his effort to stand, and his long thin hair floated in masses down his pale cheeks and on his shoulders; the moon was full upon him, and what a contrast did his noble features present to the ruffian band that sat and stood around him!

"And is it a scheme of murder—of cold, cowardly assassination you have dared to propose to me?" said he, darting a look of fiery indignation on him who seemed the leader. "Is it thus you understand my presence in your country, and in your cause? Think ye it was for this that I left the glorious army of France—that I quitted the field of honourable war to mix with such as you? Ay, if it were the last word I were to speak on earth, I'd denounce you, wretches that stain with blood and massacre the sacred cause the best and boldest bleed for."

The click of a trigger sounded harshly on my ear, and my blood ran cold with horror; De Meudon heard it too, and continued,—

"You do but cheat me of an hour or two, and I am ready."

He paused, as if waiting for the shot. A deadly silence followed; it lasted for some minutes, when again he spoke,—

"I came here to-night not knowing of your intentions, not expecting you; I came here to choose a grave, where, before another week pass over, I hoped to rest; if you will it sooner, I shall not gainsay you."

Low murmurs ran through the crowd, and something like a tone of pity could be heard mingling through the voices.

"Let him go home, then, in God's name!" said one of the number; "that's the best way."

"Ay, take him home," said another, addressing me. "Dan Kelly's a hard man when he's roused."

The words were repeated on every side, and I led De Meudon forth leaning on my arm, for already, the excitement over, a stupid indifference crept over him, and he walked on by my side without speaking.

I confess it was not without trepidation, and many a backward glance towards the old ruin, that I turned homeward to our cabin. There was that in their looks at which I trembled for my companion, nor do I yet know why they spared him at that moment.



CHAPTER XI.

TOO LATE.

THE day which followed the events I have mentioned was a sad one to me. The fatigue and the excitement together brought on fever with De Meudon. His head became attacked, and before evening his faculties began to wander. All the strange events of his chequered life were mixed up in his disturbed intellect, and he talked on for hours about Italy, and Egypt, the Tuileries, La Vendée, and Ireland, without ceasing. The entire of the night he never slept, and the next day the symptoms appeared still more aggravated. The features of his insanity were wilder and less controllable. He lost all memory of me, and sometimes the sight of me at his bedside threw him into most terrific paroxysms of passion; while at others, he would hold my hand for hours together, and seem to feel my presence as something soothing. His frequent recurrence to the scene in the churchyard showed the deep impression it had made upon his mind, and how fatally it had influenced the worst symptoms of his malady.

Thus passed two days and nights. On the third morning exhaustion seemed to have worn him into a false calm. His wild, staring eye had become heavier; his movements less rapid; the spot of colour had left his cheek: the

mouth was pinched up and rigid; and a flatness of the muscles of the face betokened complete depression. He spoke seldom, and with a voice hoarse and cavernous, but no longer in the tone of wild excitement as before. I sat by his bedside still and in silence, my own sad thoughts my only company. As it grew later, the sleepless days and nights I had passed, and the stillness of the sick-room, overcame me, and I slept.

I awoke with a start; some dreamy consciousness of neglect had flashed across me, and I sat up. I peeped into the bed, and started back with amazement. I looked again, and there lay De Meudon, on the outside of the clothes, dressed in his full uniform—the green coat and white facing, the large gold epaulettes, the brilliant crosses on the breast; his plumed chapeau lay at one side of him, and his sabre at the other. He lay still and motionless. I held the candle near his face, and could mark a slight smile that curled his cold lip, and gave to his wan and wasted features something of their former expression.

“Oui, mon cher,” said he, in a weak whisper, as he took my hand and kissed it, “c’est bien moi;” and then added, “it was another of my strange fancies to put on these once more before I died; and, when I found you sleeping, I arose and did so. I have changed something since I wore this last: it was at a ball at Cambacérés.”

My joy at hearing him speak once more, with full possession of his reason, was damped by the great change a few hours had worked in his appearance. His skin was cold and clammy; a gluey moisture rested on his cheek, and his teeth were dark and discoloured. A slimy froth, too, was ever rising to his lips as he spoke, while at every respiration his chest heaved and waved like a stormy sea.

“You are thirsty, Charles,” said I, stooping over him to wet his lips.

“No,” said he, calmly, “I have but one thing which wants relief; it is here”

He pressed his hand to his heart as he spoke, while such a look of misery as crossed his features I never beheld.

“Your heart——”

“Is broken,” said he, with a sigh.

For some minutes he said nothing, then whispered,—

“Take my pocket-book from beneath my pillow—yes,

that's it. There is a letter you'll give my sister—you'll promise me that; well, the other is for Lecharlier, the *chef* of the Polytechnique at Paris—that is for you—you must be *un élève* there. There are some five or six thousand francs—it's all I have now—they are yours. Marie is already provided for—tell her—but no, she has forgiven me long since—I feel it. You'll one day win your grade—high up; yes, you must do so. Perhaps it may be your fortune to speak with General Bonaparte; if so, I beg you say to him that, when Charles de Meudon was dying—in exile—with but one friend left of all the world, he held this portrait to his lips, and, with his last breath, he kissed it."

The fervour of the action drew the blood to his face and temples, which as suddenly became pale again; a shivering ran through his limbs—a quick heaving of his bosom—a sigh—and all was still. He was dead.

The stunning sense of deep affliction is a mercy from on high. Weak human faculties, long strained by daily communing with grief, would fall into idiocy, were their acuteness not blunted, and their perception rendered dull. It is for memory to trace back through the mazes of misery the object of our sorrow, as the widow searches for the corpse of him she loved amid the slain upon the battle-field.

I sat benumbed with sorrow, a vague desire for the breaking day my only thought. Already the indistinct glimmerings of morning were visible, when I heard the sounds of men marching along the road towards the house. I could mark, by the clank of their firelocks, and their regular step, that they were soldiers. They halted at the door of the cabin, whence a loud knocking now proceeded.

"Holloa, there!" said a voice, whose tones seemed to sink into my very heart—"holloa, Peter! get up and open the door."

"What's the matter?" cried the old man, starting up, and groping his way towards the door.

The sound of several voices, and the noise of approaching footsteps, drowned the reply; and the same instant the door of the little room in which I sat opened, and a sergeant entered.

"Sorry to disturb ye, sir," said he civilly, "but duty can't be avoided. I have a warrant to arrest Captain de

Mendon, a French officer that is concealed here. May I ask where is he ? ”

I pointed to the bed.

The sergeant approached, and by the half-light could just perceive the glitter of the uniform, as the body lay shaded by the curtain.

“ I arrest you, sir, in the King’s name,” said he. “ Holloa, Kelly ! this is your prisoner, isn’t he ? ”

A head appeared at the door as he spoke, and, as the eyes wandered stealthily round the chamber, I recognized, despite the change of colour, the wretch who led the party at the churchyard.

“ Come in, d—n ye,” said the sergeant, impatiently ; “ what are you afraid for ? Is this your man ? Holloa ! sir,” said he, shaking the corpse by the shoulder.

“ You must call even louder yet,” said I, while something like the fury of a fiend was working within me.

“ What ! ” said the sergeant, snatching up the light and holding it within the bed. He started back in horror as he did so, and called out, “ He is dead ! ”

Kelly sprang forward at the word, and seizing the candle, held it down to the face of the corpse ; but the flame rose as steadily before those cold lips as though the breath of life had never warmed them.

“ I’ll get the reward, anyhow, sergeant, won’t I ? ” said the ruffian, while the thirst for gain added fresh expression to his savage features.

A look of disgust was the only reply he met with, as the sergeant walked into the outer room, and whispered something to the man of the house. At the same instant the galloping of a horse was heard on the causeway. It came nearer and nearer, and ceased suddenly at the door, as a deep voice shouted out,—

“ Well, all right, I hope, sergeant. Is he safe ? ”

A whispered reply, and a low, muttered sound of two or three voices followed, and Barton—the same man I had seen at the fray in Malone’s cabin—entered the room. He approached the bed, and drawing back the curtains rudely gazed on the dead man, while over his shoulder peered the demoniac countenance of the informer, Kelly, his savage features working in anxiety lest his gains should have escaped him.

Barton's eye ranged the little chamber till it fell on me, as I sat still and motionless against the wall. He started slightly, and then advancing close, fixed his piercing glance upon me.

"Ha!" cried he, "*you* here! Well, that is more than I looked for this morning. I have a short score to settle with you. Sergeant, here's one prisoner for you, at any rate."

"Yes," said Kelly, springing forward, "he was at the churchyard with the other; I'll swear to that."

"I think we can do without your valuable aid in this business," said Barton, smiling maliciously. "Come along, young gentleman, we'll try and finish the education that has begun so prosperously."

My eyes involuntarily turned to the table where De Meudon's pistols were lying. The utter hopelessness of such a contest deterred me not. I sprang towards them; but, as I did so, the strong hand of Barton was on my collar, and, with a hoarse laugh, he threw me against the wall, as he called out,—

"Folly, boy, mere folly; you are quite sure of the rope without that. Here, take him off."

As he spoke, two soldiers seized me on either side, and, before a minute elapsed, pinioned my arms behind my back. In another moment the men fell in, the order was given to march, and I was led away between the files, Kelly following at the rear; while Barton's voice might be heard issuing from the cabin, as he gave his orders for the burial of the body, and the removal of all the effects and papers to the barrack at Glencree.

We might have been about an hour on the road when Barton overtook us. He rode to the head of the party, and, handing a paper to the sergeant, muttered some words—among which I could only gather the phrase, "Committed to Newgate;" then, turning round in his saddle, he fixed his eyes on Kelly, who, like a beast of prey, continued to hang upon the track of his victim.

"Well, Dan," cried he, "you may go home again now. I am afraid you've gained nothing this time but character."

"Home!" muttered the wretch in a voice of agony; "is it face home after this morning's work?"

"And why not, man? Take my word for it, the

neighbours will be too much afraid to meddle with you now."

"Oh! Mister Barton—oh, darling! don't send me back there, for the love of Heaven! Take me with you," cried the miserable wretch, in tones of heart-moving misery. "Oh, young gentleman," said he, turning towards me, and catching me by the sleeve, "spake a word for me this day."

"Don't you think he has enough of troubles of his own to think of, Dan?" said Barton, with a tone of seeming kindness. "Go back, man—go back; there's plenty of work before you in this very county. Don't lay your hand on me, you scoundrel; your touch would pollute a hangman."

The man fell back as if stunned at the sound of these words; his face became livid, and his lips white as snow. He staggered a pace or two, like a drunken man, and then stood stock-still, his eyes fixed upon the road.

"Quick march!" said the sergeant.

The soldiers stepped out again; and as we turned the angle of the road, about a mile farther, I beheld Kelly still standing in the self-same attitude we left him. Barton, after some order to the sergeant, soon left us, and we continued our march till near nine o'clock, when the party halted to breakfast. They pressed me to eat with every kind entreaty, but I could taste nothing, and we resumed our road after half an hour; but, the day becoming oppressively hot, it was deemed better to defer our march till near sunset. We stopped, then, during the noon, in a shady thicket near the roadside, where the men, unbuckling their knapsacks and loosening their stocks, lay down in the deep grass, either chatting together or smoking. The sergeant made many attempts to draw me into conversation, but my heart was too full of its own sensations either to speak or listen; so he abandoned the pursuit with a good grace, and betook himself to his pipe at the foot of a tree, where, after its last whiff escaped, he sank into a heavy sleep.

Such of the party as were not disposed for sleep gathered together in a little knot on a small patch of green grass, in the middle of a beech clump, where, having arranged themselves with as much comfort as the place permitted, they began chatting away over their life and its adventures pleasantly

and freely. I was glad to seek any distraction from my own gloomy thoughts in listening to them, as I lay only a few yards off; but, though I endeavoured with all my might to attend to, and take interest in, their converse, my thoughts always turned to him I had lost for ever—the first, the only friend I had ever known.

All care for myself and what fortune awaited me was merged in my sorrow for him. If not indifferent to my fate, I was at least unmindful of it, and although the words of those near me fell upon my ear, I neither heard nor marked them. From this dreamy lethargy I was at last suddenly aroused by the hearty bursts of laughter that broke from the party, and a loud clapping of hands that denoted their applause of something, or somebody then before them.

"I say, George," said one of the soldiers, "he's a queer 'un, too, that piper."

"Yes—he's a droll chap," responded the other solemnly, as he rolled forth a long curl of smoke from the angle of his mouth.

"Can you play 'Rule Britannia,' then?" asked another of the men.

"No, sir," said a voice I at once knew to be no other than my friend Darby's—"no, sir; but av the 'Fox's Lament,' or 'Mary's Dream,' wasn't uncongenial to your sentiments, it would be a felicity to me to expatiate upon the same before yez."

"Eh, Bell," cried a rough voice, "does that beat you now?"

"No," said another, "not a bit; he means he'll give us something Irish instead; he don't know 'Rule Britannia!'"

"Not know 'Rule Britannia!' why, where the devil were you ever bred or born, man—eh?"

"Kerry, sir, the kingdom of Kerry, was the nativity of my father. My maternal progenitrix emanated from Clare. Maybe you've heard the adage—

'From Kerry his father, from Clare came his mother,
He's more rogue nor fool on one side and the other.'

Not but that, in my humble individuality, I am an exceptional illustration of the proverbial catastrophe."

Another shout of rude laughter from his audience followed this speech, amid the uproar of which Darby began tuning his pipes, as if perfectly unaware that any singularity on his part had called forth the mirth.

“Well, what are we to have, old fellow, after all that confounded squeaking and grunting?” said he who appeared the chief spokesman of the party.

“’Tis a trifling production of my own muse, sir—a kind of biographical, poetical, and categorical dissertation of the delights, devices, and daily doings of your obay-dient servant, and ever submissive slave, Darby the Blast.”

Though it was evident very little of his eloquent announcement was comprehended by the party, their laughter was not less ready, and a general chorus proclaimed their attention to the song.

Darby accordingly assumed his wonted dignity of port, and having given some half dozen premonitory flourishes, which certainly had the effect of astonishing and overawing the audience, he began, to the air of “The Night before Larry was stretched,” the following ditty:—

DARBY THE BLAST.

Oh! my name it is Darby the Blast,
 My country is Ireland all over,
 My religion is never to fast,
 But live, as I wander, in clover;
 To make fun for myself every day,
 The ladies to plaze when I’m able,
 The boys to amuse, as I play,
 And make the jugs dance on the table.
 Oh! success to the chanter, my dear.

Your eyes on each side you may cast,
 But there isn’t a house that is near ye
 But they’re glad to have Darby the Blast,
 And they’ll tell ye ’tis he that can cheer ye.
 Oh! ’tis he can put life in a feast,
 What music lies under his knuckle,
 As he plays “Will I send for the Priest?”
 Or a jig they call “Cover the Buckle.”
 Oh! good luck to the chanter, your sowl

But give me an audience in rags,
 They’re illigant people for list’ning;
 ’Tis they that can humour the bags,
 As I rise a fine tune at a christ’ning.
 There’s many a weddin’ I make
 Where they never get further nor sighing;
 And when I perform at a wake,
 The corpse looks delighted at dying.
 Oh! success to the chanter, your sowl

"Eh! what's that?" cried a gruff voice; "the corpse does what?"

"'Tis a rhetorical amplification, that means, he would if he could," said Darby, stopping to explain.

"I say," said another, "that's all gammon and stuff; a corpse couldn't know what was doing—eh! old fellow?"

"'Tis an Irish corpse I was describin'," said Darby, proudly, and evidently, while sore pushed for an explanation, having a severe struggle to keep down his contempt for the company that needed it.

An effort I made at this moment to obtain a nearer view of the party, from whom I was slightly separated by some low brushwood, brought my hand in contact with something sharp; I started and looked round, and to my astonishment saw a clasp-knife, such as gardeners carry, lying open beside me. In a second I guessed the meaning of this. It had been so left by Darby, to give me an opportunity of cutting the cords that bound my arms, and thus facilitating my escape. His presence was doubtless there for this object, and all the entertaining powers he displayed only brought forth to occupy the soldiers' attention while I effected my deliverance. Regret for the time lost was my first thought, my second, more profitable, was not to waste another moment; so kneeling down I managed with the knife to cut some of my fastenings, and after some little struggle freed one arm, to liberate the other was the work of a second, and I stood up untrammelled. What was to be done next? for although at liberty the soldiers lay about me on every side, and escape seemed impossible; besides, I knew not where to turn, where to look for one friendly face, nor any one who would afford me shelter. Just then I heard Darby's voice raised above its former pitch, and evidently intended to be heard by me.

"Sure there's Captain Bubbleton, of the 45th Regiment, now in Dublin, in George's Street Barracks. Ay, in George's Street Barracks," said he, repeating the words as if to impress them on me. "'Tis himself could tell you what I say is thrue; and if you wouldn't put confidential authentication on the infirmation of a poor leather-squeezing, timber-tickling crayture like myself, sure you'd have reverential obaydience to your own commissioned captain."

“Well, I don’t think much of that song of yours, anyhow, old Blow, or Blast, or whatever your name is. Have you nothing about the service—eh? ‘The British Grenadiers,’ give us that.”

“Yes; ‘The British Grenadiers,’ that’s the tune!” cried a number of the party together.

“I never heard them play but onst, sir,” said Darby, meekly, “and they were in sich a hurry that day, I couldn’t pick up the tune.”

“A hurry! what d’you mean?” said the corporal.

“Yes, sir, ’twas the day but one after the French landed; and the British Grenadiers that you were talking of was running away towards Castlebar.”

“What’s that you say there?” cried out one of the soldiers, in a voice of passion.

“’Tis that they wor running away, sir,” replied Darby, with a most insulting coolness; “and small blame to thim for that same, av they wor frightened.”

In an instant the party sprang to their legs, while a perfect shower of curses fell upon the luckless piper, and fifty humane proposals to smash his skull, break his neck and every bone in his body, were mooted on all sides. Meanwhile, M’Keown remonstrated in a spirit which in a minute I perceived was not intended to appease their irritation; on the contrary, his apologies were couched in very different guise, being rather excuses for his mishap in having started a disagreeable topic, than any regret for the mode in which he treated it.

“And sure, sir,” continued he, addressing the corporal, “twasn’t my fault av they tuck to their heels; wouldn’t any one run for his life av he had the opportunity?”

He raised his voice once more at these words with such significance that I resolved to profit by the counsel if the lucky moment should offer. I had not long to wait—the insulting manner of Darby, still more than his words, had provoked them beyond endurance, and one of the soldiers, drawing his bayonet, drove it through the leather bag of his pipes; a shout of rage from the piper, and a knock-down blow that levelled the offender, replied to the insult. In an instant the whole party were upon him—their very numbers, however, defeated their vengeance; as I could hear from the tone of Darby’s voice, who, far from declin-

ing the combat, continued to throw in every possible incentive to battle, as he struck right and left of him. "Ah, you got that—well done—'tis brave you are—ten against one—devil fear you!"

The scuffle by this time had brought the sergeant to the spot, who in vain endeavoured to ascertain the cause of the tumult, as they rolled over one another on the ground, while caps, belts, and fragments of bagpipes were scattered about on every side. The uproar had now reached its height, and Darby's yells and invectives were poured forth with true native fluency. The moment seemed propitious to me. I was free—no one near: the hint about Bubbleton was evidently intended for my guidance. I crept stealthily a few yards beneath the brushwood, and emerged safely upon the road. The sounds of the conflict, amid which Darby's own voice rose pre-eminent, told me that all were too busily engaged to waste a thought on me. I pressed forward at my best pace and soon reached the crest of a hill, from which the view extended for miles on every side; my eyes, however, were bent in but one direction—they turned westwards, where a vast plain stretched away towards the horizon, its varied surface presenting all the rich and cultivated beauty of a garden, villas and mansions surrounded with large parks, waving corn-fields and orchards, in all the luxuriance of blossom. Towards the east lay the sea, the coast line broken into jutting promontories and little bays, dotted with white cottages, with here and there some white-sailed skiff, scarce moving in the calm air. But amid all this outspread loveliness of view, my attention was fixed upon a dense and heavy cloud that seemed balanced in the bright atmosphere far away in the distance; thither my eyes turned, and on that spot was my gaze riveted, for I knew that beneath that canopy of dull smoke lay Dublin. The distant murmur of the angry voices still reached me as I stood. I turned one backward look, the road was lonely, not a shadow moved upon it; before me the mountain road descended in a zigzag course till it reached the valley; I sprang over the low wall that skirted the wayside, and with my eyes still fixed upon the dark cloud I hurried on—my heart grew lighter with every step, and when at length I reached the shelter of a pine wood, and perceived no sign of being

pursued, my spirits rose to such a pitch of excitement that I shouted for very joy.

For above an hour my path continued within the shelter of the wood, and when at last I emerged, it was not without a sense of sudden fear that I looked back upon the mountains which frowned above me, and seemed still so near. I thought, too, I could mark figures on the road, and imagined I could see them moving backwards and forwards, like persons seeking for something, and then I shuddered to think that they too might be at that very moment looking at me; the thought added fresh speed to my flight, and for some miles I pressed forward without even turning once.

It was late in the evening as I drew near the city; hungry and tired as I was, the fear of being overtaken was uppermost in my thoughts, and as I mingled in the crowds that strolled along the roads enjoying the delicious calmness of a summer's eve, I shrank from every eye like something guilty, and feared that every glance that fell on me was detection itself.

It was not until I entered the city, and found myself traversing the crowded and narrow streets that formed the outskirts, that I felt at ease, and inquiring my way to George's Street Barracks, I hurried on, regardless of the strange sights and sounds about. At that hour, the humbler portion of the population was all astir; their daily work ended, they were either strolling along with their families for an evening walk, or standing in groups around the numerous ballad-singers, who delighted their audience with diatribes against "the Union," and ridiculous attacks on the ministry of the day. These, however, were not always unmolested, for as I passed on, I saw more than one errant minstrel seized on by the soldiery, and hurried off to the guard-house to explain some uncivil or equivocal allusion to Lord Castlereagh or Mr. Cook, such evidences of arbitrary power being sure to elicit a hearty groan or shout of derision from the mob, which in turn was replied to by the soldiers; these scolding matches gave an appearance of tumult to the town, which on some occasions did not stop short at mere war of words.

In the larger and better streets such scenes were unfrequent—but here patrols of mounted dragoons or police

passed from time to time, exchanging as they went certain signals as to the state of the city; while crowds of people thronged the pathways, and conversed in a low tone, which broke forth now and then into a savage yell as often as some interference on the part of the military seemed to excite their angry passions. At the Castle gates the crowd was more dense, and apparently more daring, requiring all the efforts of the dragoons to keep them from pressing against the railings, and leave a space for the exit of carriages, which from time to time issued from the Castle yard. Few of these, indeed, went forth unnoticed. Some watchful eye would detect the occupant as he lay back to escape observation—his name would be shouted aloud, as an inevitable volley of hisses and execrations showered upon him; and in this way were received the names of Mr. Bingham, Colonel Loftus, the Right Hon. Denis Browne, Isaac Corry, and several others who happened that day to be dining with the Lord-Lieutenant, and were now on their way to the House of Commons.

Nothing struck me so much in the scene as the real or apparent knowledge possessed by the mob of all the circumstances of each individual's personal and political career; and thus the price for which they had been purchased—either in rank, place, or pounds sterling, was cried aloud amid shouts of derision and laughter, or the more vindictive yells of an infuriated populace.

"Ha! Ben, what are you to get for Baltinglass? Boroughs is up in the market.—Well, Dick, you won't take the place—nothing but hard cash.—Don't be hiding, Jemmy.—Look at the Prince of Orange, boys.—A groan for the Prince of Orange!" here a fearful groan from the mob echoed through the streets. "There's Luke Fox—ha! stole away!" here followed another yell.

With difficulty I elbowed my way through the densely-packed crowd, and at last reached the corner of George's Street, where a strong police force was stationed, not permitting the passage of any one either up or down that great thoroughfare. Finding it impossible to penetrate by this way, I continued along Dame Street, where I found the crowd to thicken as I advanced. Not only were the pathways, but the entire streets filled with people—through whom the dragoons could with difficulty force a

passage for the carriages, which continued at intervals to pass down. Around the statue of King William the mob was in its greatest force. Not merely the railings around the statue, but the figure itself was surmounted by persons, who, taking advantage of their elevated and secure position, hurled their abuse upon the police and military with double bitterness. These sallies of invective were always accompanied by some humorous allusion, which created a laugh among the crowd beneath, to which, as the objects of the ridicule were by no means insensible, the usual reply was by charging on the people, and a command to keep back—a difficult precept when pressed forward by some hundreds behind them. As I made my way slowly through the moving mass, I could see that a powerful body of horse patrolled between the mob and the front of the College, the space before which and the iron railings being crammed with students of the University, for so their caps and gowns bespoke them. Between this party and the others a constant exchange of abuse and insult was maintained, which even occasionally came to blows whenever any chance opportunity of coming in contact, unobserved by the soldiery, presented itself.

In the interval between these rival parties each member's carriage was obliged to pass, and here each candidate for the honours of one and the execrations of the other, met his bane and antidote.

“Ha! broken beak, there you go! bad luck to you! Ha! old vulture, Flood!”

“Three cheers for Flood, lads!” shouted a voice from the College, and in the loud cry the yells of their opponents were silenced, but only to break forth the next moment into further license.

“Here he comes, here he comes,” said the mob; “make way there, or he'll take you flying. It's himself can do it. God bless your honour, and may you never want a good baste under ye!”

This civil speech was directed to a smart, handsome-looking man of about five-and-forty, who came dashing along on a roan thoroughbred, perfectly careless of the crowd, through which he rode with a smiling face and a merry look. His leathers and tops were all in perfect

jockey style, and even to his long-lashed whip he was in everything a sportsmanlike figure.

"That's George Ponsonby," said a man beside me, in answer to my question; "and I suppose you know who that is?"

A perfect yell from the crowd drowned my reply, and amid the mingled curses and execrations of the mass, a dark-coloured carriage moved slowly on; the coachman evidently fearful at every step lest his horses should strike against some of the crowd, and thus license the outbreak that seemed only waiting an opportunity to burst forth.

"Ha! Bladderchops, Bloody Jack, are you there?" shouted the savage ringleaders, as they pressed up to the very glasses of the carriage, and stared at the occupant.

"Who is it?" said I, again.

"John Toler, the Attorney-General."

Amid deafening cries of vengeance against him the carriage moved on, and then rose the wild cheers of the College men to welcome their partisan. A hurrah from the distant end of Dame Street now broke on the ear, which, taken up by those nearer, swelled into a regular thunder, and at the same moment the dragoons cried out to keep back, a lane was formed in a second, and down it came six smoking thoroughbreds; the postilions in white and silver, cutting and spurring with all their might. Never did I hear such a cheer as now burst forth; a yellow chariot, its panels covered with emblazonry, came flying past; a hand waved from the window in return to the salutation of the crowd, and the name of Tom Conolly of Castletown rent the very air; two outriders in their rich liveries followed, unable to keep their place through the thick mass that wedged in after the retiring equipage.

Scarcely had the last echo of the voices subsided when a cheer burst from the opposite side, and a waving of caps and handkerchiefs proclaimed that some redoubted champion of Protestant ascendancy was approaching. The crowd rocked to and fro as question after question poured in.

"Who is it, who is coming?" But none could tell, for as yet the carriage, whose horses were heard at a smart trot, had not turned the corner of Grafton Street; in a few moments the doubt seemed resolved, for scarcely did the horses appear in sight when a perfect yell rose from the

crowd and drowned the cheers of their opponents. I cannot convey anything like the outbreak of vindictive passion that seemed to convulse the mob, as a splendidly-appointed carriage drove rapidly past and made towards the colonnade of the Parliament House. A rush of the people was made at the moment, in which, as in a wave, I was borne along in spite of me. The dragoons, with drawn sabres, pressed down upon the crowd, and a scene of frightful confusion followed; many were sorely wounded by the soldiers, some were trampled under foot, and one poor wretch in an effort to recover himself from stumbling, was supposed to be stooping for a stone, and cut through the skull without mercy. He lay there insensible for some time, but at last a party of the crowd, braving everything, rushed forward and carried him away to an hospital. During this, I had established myself on the top of a lamp-post, which gave me a full view, not only of all the proceedings of the mob, but of the different arrivals as they drew up at the door of the house. The carriage whose approach was signaled by all these disasters, had now reached the colonnade. The steps were lowered, and a young man of the very handsomest and most elegant appearance descended slowly from the chariot; his dress was in the height of the reigning fashion, but withal had a certain negligence that bespoke one who less paid attention to toilette, than that his costume was a thing of course, which could not but be, like all about him, in the most perfect taste. In his hand he held a white handkerchief, which, as he carelessly shook, the perfume floated over the savage-looking, half-naked crowd around; he turned to give some directions to his coachman, and at the same moment a dead cat was hurled by some one in the crowd and struck him on the breast, a cry of exultation rending the very air in welcome of this ruffian act: as for him, he slowly moved his face round towards the mob, and as he brushed the dirt from his coat with his kerchief he bestowed on them one look, so full of immeasurable heartfelt contempt, that they actually quailed beneath it; the cry grew fainter and fainter, and it was only as he turned to enter the House that they recovered self-possession enough to renew their insulting shout. I did not need to ask the name, for the yell of bloody Castle-reagh shook the very air.

"Make way there—make way, boys!" shouted a rough voice from the crowd, and a roar of laughter, that seemed to burst from the entire street, answered the command, and the same instant a large burly figure advanced through a lane made for him in the crowd, mopping his great bullet-head with a bright scarlet handkerchief.

"Long life to you, Mr. Egan!" shouted one.

"Three cheers for Bully Egan, boys!" cried another, and the appeal was responded to at once.

"Make way, you blackguards, make way, I say," said Egan, affecting to be displeased at this display of his popularity, "don't you see who's coming?" Every eye was turned at once towards Daly's club-house, in which direction he pointed; but it was some minutes before the dense crowd would permit anything to be seen. Suddenly, however, a cheer arose wilder and louder than any I had yet heard; from the street to the very housetops the cry was caught up and repeated, while a tumultuous joy seemed to rock the crowd as they moved to and fro.

At this moment the excitement was almost maddening; every neck was strained in one direction, every eye pointed thither, while the prolonged cheering was sustained with a roar as deafening as the sea in a storm. At last the crowd were forced back, and I saw three gentlemen advancing abreast: the two outside ones were holding between them the weak and trembling figure of an old and broken man, whose emaciated form and withered face presented the very extreme of lassitude and weakness; his loose coat hung awkwardly on his spare and shrunken form, and he moved along in a shuffling, slipshod fashion. As they mounted the steps of the Parliament House, the cheering grew wilder and more enthusiastic, and I wondered how he who was evidently the object could seem so indifferent to the welcome thus given him, as with bent-down head he pressed on, neither turning right nor left. With seeming difficulty he was assisted up the steps, when he slowly turned round, and, removing his hat, saluted the crowd. The motion was a simple one, but in its very simplicity was its power. The broad white forehead, across which some scanty hair floated; the eye that now beamed proudly forth, was turned upon them, and never was the magic of a look more striking; for a second all was hushed, and

then a very thunder of applause rolled out, and the name of Henry Grattan burst from every tongue. Just then one of the mob, exasperated by a stroke from the flat of a dragoon's sabre, had caught the soldier by the foot and flung him from his saddle to the ground; his comrades flew to his rescue at once, and charged the crowd, which fell back before them. The College men, taking advantage of this, sprang forward on the mob, armed with their favourite weapons, their hurdles of strong oak; the street was immediately torn up behind, and a shower of paving-stones poured in upon the luckless military, now completely hemmed in between both parties. Yells of rage and defiance rose on either side, and the cheers of the victors and cries of the wounded were mixed in mad confusion. My lamp-post was no longer an enviable position, and I slipped gently down towards the ground; in doing so, however, I unfortunately kicked off a soldier's cap. The man turned on me at once and collared me, and notwithstanding all my excuses insisted on carrying me off to the guard-house. The danger of such a thing at once struck me, and I resisted manfully. The mob cheered me, at which the soldier only became more angry; and ashamed, too, at being opposed by a mere boy, he seized me rudely by the throat. My blood rose at this, and I struck boldly at him; my fist met him in the face, and before he could recover himself the crowd were upon him. Down he went, while a rush of the mob, escaping from the dragoons, flowed over his body; at the same moment the shout, "Guard, turn out!" was heard from the angle of the Bank, and the clattering of arms and the roll of a drum followed. A cheer from the mob seemed to accept the challenge, and every hand was employed tearing up the pavement and preparing for the fray. Whether by my own self-appointment, or by common consent, I cannot say, but I at once took the leadership, and having formed the crowd into two parties, directed them, if hard pressed, to retreat either by College Street or Westmoreland Street. Thus one party could assist the other by enfilading the attacking force, unless they were in sufficient strength to pursue both together. We had not long to wait the order of battle. The soldiers were formed in a second, and the word was given to

advance at a charge. The same instant I stepped forward and cried, "Fire!" Never was an order so obeyed—a hundred paving-stones showered down on the wretched soldiers, who fell here and there in the ranks. "Again!" I shouted to my second battalion, that stood waiting for the word, and down came another hail-storm, that rattled upon their caps and muskets, and sent many a stout fellow to the rear. A wild cheer from the mob proclaimed the victory, but at the same instant a rattling of ramrods, and a clank of firelocks, was heard in front; and from the rear of the soldiers a company marched out in *échelon*, and drew up as if on parade. All was stilled, not a man moved in the crowd, indeed our tactics seemed now at an end, when suddenly the word, "Make ready—present!" was called out, and the same instant a ringing discharge of musketry tore through the crowd. Never did I witness such a scene as followed. All attempts to retreat were blocked up by the pressure from behind; and the sight of the wounded who fell by the discharge of the soldiers, seemed to paralyze every effort of the mob. One terrified cry rose from the mass, as they shrank from the muskets. Again the ramrods were heard clinking in the barrels. I saw there was but one moment, and cried out, "Courage, lads, and down upon them!" and with that I dashed madly forward, followed by the mob, that, like a mighty mass, now rolled heavily after me. The soldiers fell back as we came on; their bayonets were brought to the charge, the word "Fire low!" was passed along the line, and a bright sheet of flame flashed forth, and was answered by a scream of anguish that drowned the crash of the fire. In the rush backwards I was thrown on the ground, and at first believed I had been shot, but I soon perceived I was safe, and sprang to my legs; but the same moment a blow on the head from the butt-end of a musket smote me to the earth, and I neither saw nor heard of anything very clearly afterwards. I had, indeed, a faint, dreamy recollection of being danced upon and trampled by some hundred heavy feet, and then experiencing a kind of swinging, rocking motion, as if carried on something; but these sensations are far too vague to reason upon, much less to chronicle.

CHAPTER XII.

A CHARACTER.

THERE must have been a very considerable interval from the moment I have last recorded to that in which I next became a responsible individual; but in what manner, in what place, or in what company it was passed, the reader must excuse my indulging for many important reasons, one of which is, I never clearly knew anything of the matter.

To date my recollections from my first consciousness, I may state that I found myself on my back in a very narrow bed, a table beside me covered with phials and small flasks, with paper cravats, some of which hung down, queue fashion, to an absurd extent. A few rush-backed and bottomed chairs lay along the walls, which were coarsely whitewashed. A window, of very unclean and unprepossessing aspect, was partly shaded by a faded scarlet curtain, while the floor was equally sparingly decked with a small and ragged carpet. Where was I? was the frequent but unsatisfactory query I ever put to myself. Could this be a prison—had I been captured on that riotous evening, and carried off to gaol—or was I in Darby M'Keown's territory? for, somehow, a very general impression was on my mind that Darby's gifts of ubiquity were somewhat remarkable; or, lastly (and the thought was not a pleasant one), was this the domicile of Anthony Basset, Esq., Attorney-at-Law? To have resolved any or all of these doubts, by rising and taking a personal survey of the premises, would have been my first thought; but, unluckily, I found one of my arms bandaged, and enclosed in a brace of wooden splints; a very considerable general impression pervaded me of bruises and injuries all over my body; and, worse still, a kind of megrim accompanied every attempt to lift my head from the pillow, that made me heartily glad to lie down again, and be at rest.

That I had not fallen into unfriendly hands was about the extent to which my deductions led me, and with this consolatory fact, and a steady resolve to remain awake three days, if necessary, so as to interrogate the first visitor who should approach me, I mustered all my patience, and waited quietly. What hour of the day it was when first I awoke to even thus much of consciousness I cannot say; but I well remember watching what appeared to me twelve mortal hours in my anxious expectation; at last a key turned in an outer lock, a door opened, and I heard a heavy foot enter. This was shortly followed by another step, whose less imposing tread was, I suspected, a woman's.

"Where, in the devil's name, is the candle?" said a gruff voice, that actually seemed to me not unknown. "I left it on the table when I went out. Oh! my shin's broke—that infernal table!"

"Oh, Lord! oh, Lord!" screamed the female voice.

"Ah! you've caught it too," cried the other, in glee; "did you think you saw a little blue flame before you when your shin was barked?"

"You're a monster!" said the lady, in a tone of passionate indignation.

"Here it is—I have it," replied the other, not paying the slightest attention to the endearing epithet last bestowed; "and d—n me, if it's not burned down to the socket. Holloa there! Peter Dodd—you scoundrel, where are you?"

"Call him Saladin," said the lady, with a sneer, "and perhaps he'll answer."

"Imp of darkness, where are you gone to? Peter—Dodd—Dodd—Peter! Ah! you young blackguard, where were you all this time?"

"Asleep, sir; sure you know well, sir, it's little rest I get," said a thin, childish voice in answer. "Wasn't it five o'clock this morning when I divilled the two kidneys ye had for supper for the four officers and had to borrey the Kian pepper over the way?"

"I'll bore a gimlet-hole through your pineal gland, and stuff it with brass-headed nails, if you reply to me. Anna Maria, that was a fine thought, eh?—glorious, by Jove! There, put the candle there; hand your mistress a chair; give me my *robe de chambre*. Confound me, if it's not

getting like the kingdom of Prussia on the map, full of very straggling dependencies. Supper, Saladin."

"The sorrow taste——"

"What! thou piece of human ebony, what do you say?"

"Me hab no—a—ting in de larder," cried the child, in a broken voice.

"Isn't there a back of a duck and two slices of cold bacon?" asked the lady, in the tone of a cross-examining barrister.

"I poisoned the bacon for the rats, Miss; and for the duck——"

"Let me strangle him with my own hands," shouted the man; "let me tear him up into merry-thoughts. Look here, sirrah," said he, in a voice like John Kemble's, "there may be nothing which man eats within these walls, there may not be wherewithal to regale a sickly fly—no, not enough for one poor spider to lunch upon; but if you ever dare to reply to me, save in Oriental phrase, I'll throw you in a sack, call my mutes, and hurl you into the Bosphorus."

"Where, sir?"

"The Dodder, you son of a burnt father. My hookah."

"My slippers," repeated the lady.

"My lute, and the sherbet," added the gentleman.

By the stir in the chamber, these arrangements, or something equivalent to them, seemed to have taken place, when again I heard,—

"Dance a lively measure, Saladin; my soul is heavy."

Here a most vile tinkling of a guitar was heard, to which, by the sounds of the feet, I could perceive Saladin was moving in a species of dance.

"Let the child go to bed, and don't be making a fool of yourself," said the lady, in a voice of bursting passion.

"Thank Heaven," said I, half aloud, "*she* isn't mad."

"Tink, tink, a-tink-a-tink, tink-a-tink-a-dido," thrummed out her companion. "I say, Saladin, heat me a little porter, with an egg, and some sugar."

The door closed as the imp made his exit, and there was silence for some seconds, during which my uppermost thought was, "What infernal mischance has thrown me into a lunatic asylum?" At length the man spoke,—

"I say, Anna Maria, Cradock has this run of luck a long time."

"He plays better than you," responded the lady, sharply.

"I deny it," rejoined he, angrily. "I play whist better than any man that ever lived, except the Begum of Souta-cantantantabad, who beat my father. They played for lacs of rupees on the points, and a territory on the rub; five to two, first game against the loser, in white elephants."

"How you do talk!" said Anna Maria; "do you forget that all this rubbish doesn't go down with me?"

"Well, I mean old Hickory, that had the snuff-shop in Bath, used only to give me one point in the rub, and we played for sixpence—damme, I'll not forget it—he cleaned me out in no time. Tink, tink, a-tink-a-tink, tink-a-tink-a-dido. Here, Saladin, bear me the spicy cup, ambrosial boy!"

"Ahem!" said the lady, in a tone that didn't sound exactly like concurrence.

"Eat a few dates, and then repose," said the deep voice.

"I wish I had them, av they were eatable," said Saladin, as he turned away.

"Wretch! you have forgotten to salaam; exit slowly. Tink, tink, a-tink-a-tink. Anna Maria, he's devilish good, now, for black parts. I think I'll make Jones bring him out. Wouldn't it be original to make Othello talk broken English? 'Farewell de camp!' Eh! by Jove, that's a fine thought. 'De spirit-stir a drum, de piercy pipe'—by Jove! I like that notion."

Here the gentleman rose in a glorious burst of enthusiasm, and began repeating snatches from Shakspeare, in the pleasant travesty he had hit upon.

"Cradock revoked, and you never saw him," said the lady, dryly, interrupting the monologue.

"I did see it clearly enough, but I had done so twice the same game," said he, gaily; "and if the grave were to give up its dead, I, too, should be a murderer. Fine thought that, isn't it?"

"He won seventeen-and-sixpence from you," rejoined she, pettishly.

“Two bad half-crowns—dowlas, filthy dowlas,” was the answer.

“And the hopeful young gentleman in the next room, what profitable intentions, may I ask you, have you with respect to him?”

“Burke! Tom Burke! Bless your heart, he’s only son and heir to Burke of Mount Blazes, in the county Galway. His father keeps three packs of harriers, one of fox, and another of stag-hounds—a kind of brindled devils, three feet eight in height; he won’t take them under. His father and mine were schoolfellows at Dundunderamud, in the Himalaya, and he—that is, old Burke—saved my father’s life in a tiger-hunt; and am I to forget the heritage of gratitude my father left me?”

“You ought not, perhaps, since it was the only one he bequeathed,” quoth the lady.

“What! Is the territory of Shamdoonah and Bunfunterabad nothing? Are the great suits of red emeralds and blue opal, that were once the crown-jewels of Saidh Sing Doolah, nothing? Is the scimitar of Hafiz, with verses of the Koran in letters of pure brilliants, nothing?”

“You’ll drive me distracted with your insane folly,” rejoined the lady, rising and pushing back her chair with violence. “To talk this way when you know you haven’t got a five-pound note in the world.”

“Ha, ha, ha!” laughed out the jolly voice of the other; “that’s good, faith. If I only consented to dip my Irish property, I could raise fourteen hundred and seventy thousand pounds, so Mahony tells me. But I’ll never give up the royalties—never. There, you have my last word on the matter: rather than surrender my tin mine, I’d consent to starve on twelve thousand a year, and resign my claim to the title which, I believe, the next session will give me; and when you are Lady Machinery—something or other—maybe they won’t bite, eh? Ramskins *versus* wrinkles.”

A violent bang of the door announced at this moment the exit of the lady in a rage, to which her companion paid no attention, as he continued to mumble to himself,—

“Surrender the royalties—never. Oh, she’s gone—well, she’s not far wrong after all. I dare not draw a cheque on my own exchequer at this moment for a larger

sum than—let me see—twenty-four, twenty-five, twenty-eight-and-tenpence; with twenty-nine shillings, the grand firm of Bubbleton and Co. must shut up and suspend their payments." So saying, he walked from the room in stately fashion, and closed the door after him.

My first thought, as I listened to this speech, was one of gratefulness that I had fallen into the friendly hands of my old coach companion, whose kindness still lived fresh in my memory; my next was, what peculiar form of madness could account for the strange outpouring I had just overheard, in which my own name was so absurdly introduced, coupled with family circumstances I knew never had occurred. Sleep was now out of the question with me; for whole hours long I could do nothing but revolve in my mind all the extraordinary odds and ends of my friend Bubbleton's conversation, which I remembered to have been so struck by at my first meeting with him. The miraculous adventures of his career, his hair-breadth 'scapes, his enormous wealth, the voluptuous ease of his daily life, and his habits of luxury and expenditure with which he then astounded me, had now received some solution—while, at the same time, there was something in his own common-sense observations to himself that puzzled me much, and gave a great difficulty to all my calculations concerning him.

To all these conflicting doubts and difficulties sleep at last succeeded; but better far for me it had not; for with it came dreams such as sick men only experience; all the distorted images that rose before my wandering faculties, mingling with the strange fragments of Bubbleton's conversation, made a phantasmagoria the most perplexing and incomprehensible; and which, even on waking, I could not banish, so completely had Saladin and his *pas seul*, the guitar, the hookah, and the suit of red emeralds taken hold of my erring intellect.

Candid, though not fair reader, have you ever been tipsy? Have you ever gone so far over the boundary line that separates the land of mere sobriety from its neighbouring territory, the country of irresponsible impulses, that you actually doubted which was the way back, that you thought you saw as much good sense and good judgment on the one side of the frontier as the other, with only a strong

balance of good-fellowship to induce a preference? If you know this state, if you have taken the precise quantum of champagne, or moselle mousseux, that induces it, and yet goes no farther, then do you perfectly understand all the trials and difficulties of my waking moments, and you can appreciate the arduous task I undertook in my effort to separate the real from the imaginary, the true types from their counterfeits; in a word, the wanderings of my own brain from those of Captain Bubbleton's.

In this agreeable and profitable occupation was I engaged, when the same imposing tread and heavy footstep I had heard the previous evening entered the adjoining room and approached my door. The lock turned, and the illustrious Captain himself appeared; and here let me observe, that if grave censure be occasionally bestowed on persons who, by the assumption of voice, look, or costume, seek to terrorize over infant minds, a no less heavy sentence should be bestowed on all who lord it over the frail faculties of sickness by any absurdity in their personal appearance; and that I may not seem captious, let me describe my friend. The Captain, who was somewhere about the forties, was a full-faced, chubby, good-looking fellow, of some five feet ten or eleven inches in height; his countenance had been intended by nature for the expression of such emotions as arise from the enjoyment of turtle, milk-punch, truffled turkeys, mulled port, mulligatawny, stilton, stout, and pickled oysters; a rich, mellow-looking pair of dark-brown eyes, with large bushy eyebrows, meeting above the nose, which latter feature was a little "on the snub, and off the Roman;" his mouth was thick-lipped, and had that peculiar mobility which seems inseparable, wherever eloquence or imagination predominate; in colour, his face was of that uniform hue painters denominate as "warm," in fact, a rich sunset Claude-Lorrainish tint, that seemed a compound, the result of high-seasoned meats, plethora, punch, and the tropics; in figure, he was like a huge pudding-bag, supported on two short little dumpy pillars that, from a sense of the superincumbent weight, had wisely spread themselves out below, giving to his lower man the appearance of a stunted letter A; his arms were most preposterously short, and, for the convenience of locomotion, he used them somewhat after the

fashion of fins; as to his costume on the morning in question, it was a singularly dirty and patched dressing-gown of antique silk, fastened about the waist by a girdle, from which depended a scimitar on one side, and a meerschaum on the other; a well-worn and not over clean-looking shawl was fastened in fashion of a turban round his head; a pair of yellow buskins with faded gold tassels decorated legs which occasionally peeped from the folds of the *robe de chambre*, without any other covering.

Such was the outward man of him who suddenly stopped short at the doorway, while he held the latch in his hand, and called out,—

“Burke! Tom Burke, don’t be violent, don’t be outrageous, you see I’m armed! I’d cut you down without mercy if you attempt to lift a finger! Promise me this—do you hear me?”

That any one even unarmed could have conceived fear from such a poor weak object as I was, seemed so utterly absurd, that I laughed outright; an emotion on my part that seemingly imparted but little confidence to my friend the Captain, who retreated still closer to the door, and seemed ready for flight. The first use I could make of speech, however, was, to assure him that I was not only perfectly calm and sensible, but deeply grateful for kindness which I knew not how, nor to whom, I became indebted.

“Don’t roll your eyes there; don’t look so d—d treacherous!” said he; “keep down your hands; keep them under the bed-clothes. I’d put a bullet through your skull if you stirred!”

I again protested that any manifestation of quietness he asked for I would immediately comply with, and begged him to sit down beside me and tell me where I was and how I had come hither. Having established an outwork of a table and two chairs between us, and cautiously having left the door ajar, to secure his retreat, he drew the scimitar and placed it before him, his eyes being fixed on me the entire time.

“Well,” said he, as he assumed a seat, and leaned his arm on the table, “so you are quiet at last. Lord! what a frightful lunatic you were. Nobody would approach your bed but me. The stoutest keeper of Swift’s Hospital

fled from the spot, while I said, 'Leave him to me. The human eye is your true agent to humble the pride of maniacal frenzy.'

With these words he fixed on me a look such as the chief murderer in a melodrama assumes at the moment he proceeds to immolate a whole family.

"You infernal young villain, how I subdued you—how you quailed before me!"

There was something so ludicrous in the contrast of this bravery with his actual terror, that again I burst out a-laughing, upon which he sprang up, and brandishing his sabre, vowed vengeance on me if I stirred. After a considerable time spent thus, I at last succeeded in impressing him with the fact, that if I had all the will in the world to tear him to pieces, my strength would not suffice to carry me to the door—an assurance which, however sorrowfully made by me, I perceived to afford him the most unmixed satisfaction.

"That's right, quite right," said he, "and mad should he be indeed who would measure strength with me. The red men of Tuscarora always called me the great buffalo. I used to carry a bark canoe with my squaw and nine little black devils under one arm, so as to leave the other free for my tomahawk. 'He, how, he!' that's the war step."

Here he stooped down to his knees, and then sprang up again, with a yell that actually made me start, and brought a new actor on the scene in the person of Anna Maria, whose name I had so frequently heard the night before.

"What is the matter?" said the lady, a short, squab-like woman, of nearly the Captain's age, but none of his personal attractions. "We can't have him screaming all day in that fashion."

"It isn't he, it was I who was performing the war dance. Come, now, let down your hair, and be a squaw—do. What trouble is it? and bring in Saladin; we'll get up a combat scene; devilish fine thought that!"

The indignant look of the lady in reply to this modest proposal again overpowered me, and I sank back in my bed exhausted with laughter, an emotion which I was forced to subdue as well as I might on beholding the angry countenance with which the lady regarded me

"I say, Burke," cried the Captain, "let me present you to my sister, Miss Anna Maria Bubbleton."

A very dry recognition on Miss Anna Maria's part replied to the effort I made to salute her, and as she turned on her heel, she said to her brother, "Breakfast's ready," and left the room.

Bubbleton jumped up at this, rubbed his mouth pleasantly with his hand, smacked his lips, and then dropping his voice to a whisper, muttered,—

"Excuse me, Tom, but if I have a weakness it is for Yarmouth bloaters, and anchovy toast, milk chocolate, marmalade, hot rolls, and reindeer tongue, with a very small glass of pure white brandy, as a qualifier." So saying, he whisked about and made his exit.

While my host was thus occupied I was visited by the regimental surgeon, who informed me that my illness had now been of some weeks' duration; severe brain fever, with various attending evils, and a broken arm, being the happy results of my evening's adventure at the Parliament House.

"Bubbleton is an old friend of yours," continued the doctor; and then, without giving me time to reply, added, "capital fellow, no better; a little given to the miraculous—eh? but nothing worse."

"Why, he does indeed seem to have a strong vein for fiction," said I, half timidly.

"Bless your heart, he never ceases; his world is an ideal thing, full of impossible people and events, where he has lived at least some centuries, enjoying the intimacies of princes, statesmen, poets, and warriors; he has, in his own estimation, unlimited wealth and unbounded resources, the want of which he is never convinced of till pressed for five shillings to buy his dinner."

"And his sister," said I, "what of her?"

"Just as strange a character in the opposite direction. She is as matter-of-fact as he is imaginative. To all his flights she as resolutely enters a dissentient; and he never inflates his balloon of miracles without her stepping forward to punch a hole in it. But here they come."

"I say, Pepper, how goes your patient? Spare no pains, old fellow—no expense; only get him round. I've left a cheque for you for five hundred in the next room.

This is no regimental case—come, come, it's *my way*, and I insist upon it."

Pepper bowed with an air of the deepest gratitude, and actually looked so overpowered by the liberality, that I began to suspect there might be less truth in his account of Bubbleton than I thought a few minutes before.

"All insanity has left him—that's pleasant. I say, Tom, you must have had glorious thoughts, eh? When you were mad, did you ever think you were an anaconda bolting a goat, or the Eddystone lighthouse when the foundation began to shift?"

"No, never."

"How odd! I remember being once thrown on my head off a drag. I was breaking in a pair of young unicorns for the Queen of——"

"No!" said Anna Maria, in a voice of thunder, holding up her finger, at the same moment, in token of reproof.

The Captain became mute on the instant, and the very word he was about to utter stuck in his throat, and he stood with his mouth open, like one in enchantment.

"You said a little weak tea, I think," said Miss Bubbleton, turning towards the doctor.

"Yes, and some dry toast, if he liked it; and, in a day or two, a half glass of wine-and-water."

"Some of that tokay old Pippo Esterhazy sent us."

"No," said the lady again, in the same tone of menace.

"And, perhaps, after a week, the open air and a little exercise in a carriage."

"The barouche and the four ponies," interrupted Bubbleton.

"No," repeated Miss Anna Maria, but in such a voice of imperious meaning, that the poor Captain actually fell back, and only muttered to himself,—

"What would be the use of wealth, if one couldn't contribute to the enjoyment of one's friends?"

"There's the drum for parade," cried the doctor; "you'll be late, and so shall I."

They both bustled out of the room together, while Miss Anna Maria, taking her work out of a small bag she carried on her arm, drew a chair to the window and sat down, having quietly intimated to me that, as conversation was deemed injurious to me, I must not speak one syllable.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN UNLOOKED-FOR VISITOR.

ALL my endeavours to ascertain the steps by which I came to occupy my present abode were fruitless, inasmuch as Captain Bubbleton contrived to surround his explanation with such a mist of doubtful, if not impossible, circumstances, that I gave up the effort in despair, and was obliged to sit down satisfied with the naked fact, that it was by some soldiers of his company I was captured, and by them brought to the guard-house. Strangely enough, too, I found that, in his self-mystification, the worthy Captain had invested me with all the honours of a stanch loyalist who had earned his cracked skull in defence of the soldiery against the mob; and this prevailing impression gave such a tone to his narrative, that he not only set to work to trace back a whole generation of Burkes famed for their attachment to the House of Hanover, but also took a peep into the probable future, where he saw me covered with rewards for my heroism and gallantry.

Young as I was, I hesitated long how far I dare trust him with the real state of the case. I felt that in so doing I should either expose him to the self-reproach of having harboured one he would deem a rebel—or, by withdrawing from me his protection, give him, perhaps, greater pain by compelling him to such an ungracious act. Yet how could I receive attention and kindness under these false colours? This was a puzzling and difficult thing to resolve; and a hundred times a day I wished I had never been rescued by him, but taken my chance of the worst fortune had in store for me.

While, therefore, my strength grew with every day, these thoughts harassed and depressed me. The continual conflict in my mind deprived me of all ease; and scarcely a morning broke in which I had not decided on avowing my real position and my true sentiments; and still, when the moment came, the flighty uncertainty of Bubbleton's mau-

ner—his caprice and indiscretion—all frightened me, and I was silent. I hoped, too, that some questioning on his part might give me a fitting opportunity for such a disclosure; but here again I was deceived. The jolly Captain was far too busy inventing his own history of me, to think of asking for mine; and I found out from the surgeon of the regiment that according to the statement made at the mess-table, I was an only son, possessed of immense estates—somewhat encumbered, to be sure (among other debts, a large jointure to my mother)—that I had come up to town to consult the Attorney-General about the succession to a title long in abeyance in my family, and was going down to the House in Lord Castlereagh's carriage, when, fired by the ruffianism of the mob, I sprang out, and struck one of the ringleaders, &c., &c.

How this visionary history had its origin, or whether it had any, save in the wandering fancies of his brain, I know not; but either by frequent repetition of it, or by the strong hold a favourite notion sometimes will take of a weak intellect, he so far believed it true, that he wrote more than one letter to Lord Castlereagh, to assure him that I was rapidly recovering, and would be delighted to receive him—which, whether from a knowledge of the Captain's character, or his indifference as to my fate, the secretary certainly never took any notice of whatever.

Bubbleton had too much experience of similar instances of neglect to be either afflicted or offended at this silence; on the contrary, he satisfied his mind by an excuse of his own inventing, and went about saying, "I think we'll have Castlereagh down to-day to see Burke," until it became a cant on parade, and a jest at mess.

Meanwhile, his active mind was not lying dormant. Indignant that no inquiries had been made after me, and astonished that no aide-de-camp—not even a liveried menial of the Viceroy's household—had come down to receive the daily bulletin of my health, and somewhat piqued, perhaps, that his own important services regarding me remained unacknowledged, he set about springing a mine for himself, which very nearly became my ruin.

After about ten days spent by me in this state of painful vacillation, my mind vibrating between two opposite courses, and seeing arguments for either, both in the

matter-of-fact shortness of Miss Bubbleton's not over-courteous manner, and the splendidly liberal and vast conceptions of her brother, I went to my bed one night, resolved that on the very next morning I would hesitate no longer; and as my strength would now permit of my being able to walk unassisted, I would explain freely to Bubbleton every circumstance of my life, and take my leave of him, to wander, I knew not where. This decision at length being come to, I slept more soundly than I had slept for many nights, nor awoke until the loud step and the louder voice of the captain had aroused me from my slumbers.

"Eh, Tom—a good night, my lad? How soundly you sleep! Just like the Lachigong Indians: they go to bed after the hunting season, and never wake till the bears come in next fall. I had the knack myself once, but then I always took six or seven dozen of strong Burton ale first—and that, they said, wasn't quite fair; but for a white man, I'd back myself for a thousand to-morrow. But what's this I have to tell you? Something or other was in my head for you. Oh, I have it! I say, Tom, old fellow, I think I have touched them up to some purpose. They didn't expect it—no, hang it! they little knew what was in store for them. They weren't quite prepared for it. By Jove, that they weren't!"

"Who are they?" said I, sitting up in my bed, and somewhat curious to hear something of these astonished individuals.

"The Government, my lad!—the Castle—the Private Sec.—the Major—the Treasury—the Board of Green Cloth—the—what d'ye call them?—the Privy Council."

"Why, what has happened them?"

"I'll show you what's happened. Lie down again and compose yourself. He won't be here before twelve o'clock; though, by the bye, I promised on my honour not to say a word about his coming. But it's over now."

"Who is it?" said I, eagerly.

"Oh, I can't tell now. You'll see him very soon, and right glad he'll be to see you, so he says. But here they are—here's the whole affair." So saying, he covered the bed with a mass of newspapers, and blotted, ill-written manuscripts, among which he commenced a vigorous search at once.

“Here it is. I’ve found it out. Listen to this: ‘*The Press*, Friday, August 10.—The magnificent ourang-outang that Captain Bubbleton is about to present to the Lady-Lieutenant——’ No; that isn’t it. It must be in Faulkner. Ay, here we have it: ‘In Captain Bubbleton’s forthcoming volume, which we have been favoured with a private perusal of, a very singular account is given of the gigantic mouse found in Candia, which grows to the size of a common mastiff——’ No; that’s not it. You’ve heard of that, Tom, though, haven’t you?”

“Never,” said I, trying to repress a smile.

“I’m amazed at that. Never heard of my curious speculations about the Candian mouse! The fellow has a voice like a human being—you’d hear him crying in the woods, and you’d swear it was a child. I’ve a notion that the Greeks took their word ‘mousikos’ from this fellow; but that’s not what I’m looking for. No; but here it is. This is squib No. 1: ‘Tuesday morning.—We are at length enabled to state that the young gentleman who took such a prominent part in defending the military against the savage and murderous attack of the mob in the late riot in College Green is now out of danger; being removed to Captain Bubbleton’s quarters in George’s Street Barracks, he was immediately trepanned——’”

“Eh? trepanned!”

“No, you weren’t trepanned; but Pepper said you might have been though, and he’d just as soon do it as not; so I put in trepanned. ‘The pia-mater was fortunately not cut through.’ That you don’t understand; but no matter—hem, hem! ‘Congestion of——’ hem, hem! ‘In our next, we hope to give a still more favourable report.’ Then here’s the next: ‘To the aide-de-camp sent to inquire after the “hero of College Green,” the answer this morning was—‘Better—able to sit up.’” Well, here we go. No. 3: ‘His Excellency mentioned this morning at the Privy Council the satisfaction he felt at being able to announce that Mr. —— (from motives of delicacy we omit the name) is now permitted to take some barley-gruel, with a spoonful of old Madeira. The Bishop of Ferns and Sir Boyle Roach both left their cards yesterday at the barracks.’ I waited a day or two after this; but—would you believe it?—no notice was taken; not even

the opposition papers said a word, except some insolent rascal in *The Press* asks—'Can you tell your readers are we to have anything more from Captain Bubbleton?' So then I resolved to come out in force, and here you see the result: 'Friday, 20th.—It is now our gratifying task to announce the complete restoration of the young gentleman whose case has, for some weeks past, been the engrossing topic of conversation of all ranks and classes, from the table of the Viceroy to the humble denizen of Mud Island. Mr. Burke is the only son and heir to the late Matthew Burke, of Cremore, county of Galway. His family have been long distinguished for their steady, uncompromising loyalty; nor is the hereditary glory of their house likely to suffer in the person of the illustrious youth, who, we learn, is now to be raised to the baronetcy, under the title of Sir Thomas Bubbleton Burke, the second name assumed to commemorate the services of Captain Bubbleton, whose——' Of course I dilated a little here to round the paragraph. Well, this did it. Here was the shell that exploded the magazine; for early this morning I received a polite note from the Castle; I won't tell you the writer though. I like a good bit of surprise; and, egad, now I think on't, I won't say anything more about the letter either, only that we're in luck, my lad, as you'll soon acknowledge. What's the hour now? Ah! a quarter to twelve. But wait, I think I hear him in the next room; jump up, and dress as fast as you can, while I do the honours."

With this the Captain bustled out of the room; and, although he banged the door after him, I could hear his voice in the act of welcoming some new arrival.

In spite of the sea of nonsense and absurdity through which I had waded in the last half-hour, the communication he had made me excited my curiosity to the utmost, and in some respect rendered me uneasy. It was no part whatever of my object to afford any clue to Basset by which he might trace me, and, although much of the fear I had formerly entertained of that dreaded personage had evaporated with increased knowledge of the world, yet old instincts preserved their influence over me, and I felt as though Tony Basset would be a name of terror to me for my life long. It was quite clear, however, that the application from the Castle to which he alluded could have no

reference to the honest attorney; and with this comforting reflection, which I confess came somewhat late, I finished my dressing, and prepared to leave my room.

"Oh! here he comes," cried Bubbleton, as he flung open my door, and announced my approach. "Come along, Tom, and let us see if your face will let you be recognized."

I scarcely had crossed the threshold when I started back with affright, and, had it not been for the wall against which I leaned, must have fallen. The stranger, whose visit was to afford me so much of pleasure was no other than Major Barton; there he stood, his arm leaning on the chimney-piece, the same cool malicious smile playing about the angles of his mouth, which I noticed the first day I saw him in the glen. His sharp eyes shot on me one quick, searching glance, and then turned to the door, from which again they were directed to me, as if some passing thought had moved them.

Bubbleton was the first to speak, for, not noticing either the agitation I was under or the stern expression of Barton's features, he ran on:—

"Eh, Major! that's your friend—isn't it? Changed a bit, I suppose—a little blanched; but in a good cause, you know,—that's the thing. Come, Tom, you don't forget your old friend, Major—— what's the name?"

"Barton," repeated the other, dryly.

"Yes, Major Barton; he's come from his Excellency. I knew that last paragraph would do it—eh, Major?"

"You were quite right, sir," said Barton, slowly and distinctly, "that paragraph did do it; and very fortunate you may esteem yourself, if it will not do *you* also."

"Eh, what! how *me*? What d'you mean?"

"How long, may I beg to ask," continued Barton, in the same quiet tone of voice, "have you known this young gentleman?"

"Burke—Tom Burke?—bless your heart, since the height of that fender. His father and mine were school-fellows. I'm not sure he wasn't my godfather, or, at least, one of them; I had four." Here the Captain began counting on his fingers. "There was the Moulah, one; the Cham, two ——"

"I beg your pardon for the interruption," said Barton,

with affected politeness ; "how long has he occupied these quarters ? That fact may possibly not be too antiquated for your memory."

"How long ?" said Bubbleton, reflectingly. "Let me see: here we are in August——"

"Three weeks on Tuesday last," said I, interfering, to prevent any further drain on so lavish an imagination.

"Then you came here on the day of the riots ?" said Barton.

"On that evening," was my reply.

"On that evening—just so. Before or after, may I ask ?"

"I shall answer no further questions," said I, resolutely. "If you have any charge against me, it is for you to prove it."

"Charge against you!" said Bubbleton, laughing. "Bless your heart, boy, don't mistake him; they've sent him down to compliment you. Lord Castlereagh mentions in his note—where the devil did I throw that note ?"

"It's of no consequence, Captain," said Barton, dryly ; "his Lordship usually entrusts the management of these matters to me. May I learn, is this young gentleman known in your regiment ? Has he been at your mess ?"

"Tom Burke known among us ! Why, man, he's called nothing but 'Burke of Ours.' He's one of ourselves—not gazetted, you know, but all the same, in fact. We couldn't get on without him ; he's like the mess-plate, or the orderly-book, or the regimental snuff-box."

"I'm sincerely sorry, sir," rejoined Barton, slowly, "to rob you and the gallant Forty-fifth of one upon whom you place such just value ; but 'Burke of Ours' must consent to be Burke of mine at present."

"To be sure, my dear Major, of course ; anything convivial—nothing like good fellowship. We'll lend him to you for to-day—one day, mark me—we can't spare him longer ; and, now I think of it, don't press him with his wine, he's been poorly of late."

"Have no fears on that score," said Barton, laughing outright ; "our habits of life, in his circumstances, are rigidly temperate." Then, turning to me, he continued, in an altered voice, "I need scarcely explain to *you*, sir, the reason of my visit. When last we parted I did not

anticipate that our next meeting would have been in a royal barrack; but you may thank your friend here for my knowledge of your abode——”

Bubbleton attempted to interpose here a panegyric on himself, but Barton went on,—

“Here is an order of the Privy Council for your apprehension, and here——”

“Apprehension!” echoed the Captain, in a voice of wonderment and terror.

“Here, sir, is your committal to Newgate. I suppose you’ll not give me the trouble of using force; I have a carriage in waiting below, and request that we may lose no more time.”

“I am ready, sir,” said I, as stoutly as I was able.

“To Newgate!” repeated Bubbleton, as, overcome with fright, he sank back in a chair, and crossed his arms on his breast. “Poor fellow! poor fellow! perhaps they’ll bring it in manslaughter, eh?—or was it a bank robbery?”

Not even the misery before me could prevent my smiling at the worthy Captain’s rapidly-conceived narrative of me. I was in no merry mood, however; and, turning to him, grasped his hand.

“It may happen,” said I, “that we never meet again. I know not—indeed, I hardly care—what is before me; but, with all my heart, I thank you for your kindness. Farewell.”

“Farewell,” said he, half mechanically, as he grasped my hand in both of his, and the large tears rolled down his cheeks. “Poor fellow! all my fault—see it now.”

I hurried after Barton down stairs, a nervous choking in my throat nearly suffocating me. Just as I reached the door the carriage drew up, and a policeman let down the steps. Already my foot was on them, when Bubbleton was beside me.

“I’ll go with him, Major; you’ll permit me, won’t you?”

“Not at present, Captain,” said Barton, significantly; “it may happen that we shall want you, one of these days. Good-bye.”

He pushed me forward as he spoke, and entered the carriage after me. I felt the pressure of poor Bubbleton’s

hand as he grasped mine for the last time, and discovered he had slipped something into my palm at parting. I opened and found two guineas in gold, which the kind-hearted fellow had given me; perhaps they were his only ones in the world.



CHAPTER XIV.

THE GAOL.

FROM the moment the carriage-door closed upon us, Barton never addressed one word to me, but, leaning back, seemed only anxious to escape being recognized by the people, whose attention was drawn to the vehicle by seeing two mounted policemen ride at either side of it. We drove along the quays, and, crossing an old, dilapidated bridge, traversed several obscure and mean-looking streets, through which numbers of persons were hurrying in the same direction we were going. At length we arrived at a large open space, thronged with people, whose dress and appearance bespoke them from the country. They were all conversing in a low, murmuring tone, and looking up, from time to time, towards a massive building of dark granite, which I had only to glance at to guess was Newgate. Our pace slackened to a walk as we entered the crowd; and while we moved slowly along, I was struck by the eager and excited faces I saw on every side. It could be no common occasion which impressed that vast multitude with the one character of painful anxiety I beheld. As they stood gazing with upturned faces at the frowning portals of the gaol, the deep, solemn tolling of a bell rung out at the moment, and as its sad notes vibrated through the air, it seemed to strike with a mournful power on every heart in the crowd. In an instant, too, the windows of all the houses were thronged with eager faces—even the

parapets were crowded—and, while every sound was hushed, each eye was turned in one direction. I followed with my own whither the others were bent, and beheld above my head the dark framework of the “drop,” covered with black cloth, above which a piece of rope swung backwards and forwards with the wind. The narrow door behind was closed; but it was clear that each second that stole by was bringing some wretched criminal closer to his awful doom.

As we neared the entrance, the massive doors were opened on a signal from a policeman on the box of the carriage, and we drove inside the gloomy vestibule. It was only then, as the heavy door banged behind me, that my heart sank. Up to that moment a mingled sense of wrong, and a feeling of desperate courage, had nerved me; but suddenly a cold chill ran through my veins, my knees smote each other, and fear, such as till then I never knew, crept over me. The carriage-door was now opened, the steps lowered, and Barton descending first, addressed a few words to a person near him, whom he called Mr. Gregg.

It was one of those moments in life in which every passing look, every chance word, every stir, every gesture, are treasured up, and remembered ever after: and I recollect now how, as I stepped from the carriage, a feeling of shame passed across me, lest the bystanders should mark my fear, and what a relief I experienced on finding that my presence was unnoticed; and then the instant after, that very same neglect, that cold, cold indifference to me, smote as heavily on my spirits, and I looked on myself as one whose fate had no interest for any—in whose fortune none sympathized.

“Drive on!” cried a rough voice to the coachman; and the carriage moved through the narrow passage, in which some dozen of persons were now standing. The next moment, a murmur of “They are coming!” was heard, and the solemn tones of a man’s voice chanting the last offices of the Romish Church reached us, with the measured footfall of persons crossing the flagged courtyard. In the backward movement now made by those around me, I was brought close to a small arched doorway, within which a flight of stone steps ascended in a spiral

direction, and towards this point I remarked that the persons who approached were tending. My eyes scarcely glanced on those who came first, but they rested with a fearful interest on the bareheaded priest, who, in all the trappings of his office, walked, book in hand, repeating with mournful impressiveness the litany for the dead. As he came nearer, I could see that his eyes were dimmed with tears, and his pale lips quivered with emotion, while his very cheek trembled with a convulsive agony. Not so he who followed. He was a young man, scarce four-and-twenty, dressed in loose white trousers and shirt, but without coat, vest, or cravat; his head bare, and displaying a broad forehead, across which some straggling hairs of light brown were blown by the wind. His eye was bright and flashing, and in the centre of his pale cheek a small crimson spot glowed with a hectic colouring. His step was firm, and as he planted it upon the ground, a kind of elasticity seemed to mark his footfall. He endeavoured to repeat after the priest the words as they fell from him; but as he looked wildly around, it was clear his mind was straying from the subject which his lips expressed, and that thoughts far different were passing within him. Suddenly his eyes fell upon the Major, who stood close to where I was. The man started back, and for a second even that small spot of crimson left his cheek, which became nearly livid in its pallor. A ghastly smile, that showed his white teeth from side to side, crossed his features, and with a voice of terrible earnestness, he said,—

"'Tis easy for you to look calm, sir, at your mornin's work, and I hope you're plazed at it." Then frowning fearfully, as his face grew purple, he added, "But, by the Eternal! you'd not look that way av we two stood by ourselves on the side of Sliebmish, and nothing but our own four arms between us."

The horrible expression of vengeance that lit up his savage face at these words seemed to awe even the callous and stern nature of Barton himself. All his efforts to seem calm and at ease were for the moment unavailing, and he shrank from the proud and flashing eye of the felon, as though he were the guilty one in the presence of his accuser.

Another stroke of the heavy bell rang out; the pri-

soner started, and, turning round his head, seemed to peer anxiously through the crowd behind him, when his eyes fell upon the figure of a man apparently a year or two younger than himself, and whose features, even in their livid colouring, bore a striking resemblance to his own.

"Come, Patsey," cried he—"come along with us." Then turning to the gaoler, while his face assumed a smile, and his voice a tone of winning softness, he added, "It is my brother, sir; he is come up nigh eighty miles to see me, and I hope you'll let him come upon the drop."

There was something in the quiet earnestness of his manner in such a moment that thrilled upon the heart more painfully than even the violent outbreak of his passion; and when I saw the two brothers hand in hand, march step by step along, and then disappear in the winding of the dark stair, a sick, cold feeling came over me, and even the loud shout that rent the air from the assembled thousands without scarce roused me from my stupor.

"Come, sir," cried a man, who in the dress of an official had been for some minutes carefully reading over the document of my committal, "after me, if you please."

I followed him across the courtyard in the direction of a small building which stood isolated and apart from the rest, when suddenly he stopped, and carefully examining the paper in his hand, he said,—

"Wait a moment, I'll join you presently."

With these words, he hurried back towards the gate, where Barton still stood with two or three others. What passed between them I could not hear, but I could distinctly mark that Barton's manner was more abrupt and imperious than ever; and that while the gaoler—for such he was—expressed his scruples of one kind or another, the Major would not hear him with patience, but, turning his back upon him, called out loud enough to be heard even where I stood,—

"I tell you I don't care—regular or irregular—if you refuse to take him in charge, on your head be it. We have come to a pretty pass, Pollock," said he, turning to a person beside him, "when there is more sympathy for a rebel in his Majesty's gaol, than respect for a Government officer."

"I'll do it, sir—I'll do it," cried the gaoler; saying which he motioned me to follow, while he muttered between his teeth, "there must come an end to this, one day or other."

With that he unlocked a strongly barred gate, and led me along a narrow passage, at the extremity of which he opened a door into a small and rather comfortably furnished room.

"Here, sir," said he, "you'll be better than where I have my orders to put you, and, in any case, I trust that our acquaintance will be but a short one."

These were the first words of kindness I had heard for some time past. I turned to thank the speaker, but already the door had closed, and he was gone.

The quickly succeeding incidents of my life—the dark destiny that seemed to track me—had given a reflective character to my mind while I was yet a boy. The troubles and cares of life, that in manhood serve only to mould and fashion character, to call forth efforts of endurance, of courage, or ability, come upon us in early years with far different effect and far different teaching. Every lesson of deceit and duplicity is a direct shock to some preconceived notion of faith and honour; every punishment, whose severity in after years we had forgotten in its justice, has to the eyes of youth a character of vindictive cruelty. Looking only to effects, and never to causes, our views of life are one-sided and imperfect; the better parts of our nature will as often mislead us by false sympathy, as will the worst ones by their pernicious tendency.

From the hour I quitted my father's house to the present, I had seen nothing but what to me appeared the sufferings of a poor, defenceless people at the hands of wanton tyranny and outrage. I had seen the peasant's cabin burned because it had been a shelter to an outcast. I had heard the loud and drunken denunciations of a ruffianly soldiery against those who professed no other object, who acknowledged no other wish, than liberty and equality; and in my heart I vowed a rooted hate to the enemies of my country—a vow that lost nothing of its bitterness because it was made within the walls of a prison.

In reflections like these my evening passed on, and with

it the greater part of the night also. My mind was too much excited to permit me to sleep, and I longed for day-break with that craving impatience which sick men feel, who count the long hours of darkness, and think the morning must bring relief. It came at last, and the heavy, clanking sounds of massive doors opening and shutting—the mournful echoes that told of captivity and durance—sighed along the corridors, and then all was still.

There is a time in reverie when silence seems not to encourage thought, but rather, like some lowering cloud, to hang over and spread a gloomy insensibility around us. Long watching and much thinking had brought me now to this, and I sat looking upon the faint streak of sunlight that streamed through the barred window, and speculating within myself when it would fall upon the hearth. Suddenly I heard the sound of footsteps in the corridor; my door was opened, and the gaoler entered, followed by a man carrying my breakfast.

“Come, sir,” said the former, “I hope you have got an appetite for our prison fare. Lose no time, for there is a carriage in waiting to bring you to the Castle, and the Major himself is without.”

“I am ready this moment,” said I, starting up, and taking my hat; and notwithstanding every entreaty to eat, made with kindness and good-nature, I refused everything, and followed him out into the courtyard, where Barton was pacing up and down, impatiently awaiting our coming.



CHAPTER XV.

THE CASTLE.

SCARCELY had the carriage driven from the gloomy portals of the gaol, and entered one of the long, straggling streets that led towards the river, when I noticed a singular-looking figure who ran alongside, and kept up with us as we went. A true type of the raggedness of old Dublin, his clothes fluttered behind him like ribbons; even from his hat, his long, red hair straggled and streamed, while his nether garments displayed a patchwork no tartan could vie with; his legs were bare, save where a single top-boot defended one of them, the other was naked to the foot, clad in an old morocco slipper, which he kicked up and caught again as he went with surprising dexterity, accompanying the feat with a wild yell which might have shamed a war-whoop; he carried a bundle of printed papers over one arm, and flourished one of them in his right hand, vociferating something all the while with uncommon energy. Scarcely had the carriage drawn up at the door of an old-fashioned brick building when he was beside it.

"How are ye, Major? How is every bit of you, sir? Are ye taking them this mornin'?—'tis yourself knows how! Buy a ha'porth, sir."

"What have you got to-day, Toby?" said the Major, with a greater degree of complacency in his manner than I had ever noticed before.

"An illigant new song about Buck Whaley; or, maybe, you'd like 'Beresford's Jig; or, the Humours of Malbro' Green.'"

"Why, man, they're old these three weeks."

"True for ye, Major. Begorra! there's no chating you at all, at all. Well, maybe you'll have this. Here's the bloody and cruel outrage committed by the yeomen on the body of a dacent and respectable young man, by the name of Darby M'Keown, with the full and true account of how

he was inhumanly stabbed and murdered on the 8th day of July——”

“Ay, give me that; I hope they’ve done for that scoundrel; I have been on his track three years.”

The fellow drew near, and, as he handed the paper to the Major, contrived to approach close to where I stood. “Buy one, master,” said he; and, as he spoke, he turned completely round, so as only to be observed by myself, and as suddenly the whole expression of his vacant features changed like magic, and I saw before me the well-known face of Darby himself.

“Did you get an answer to that for me, Toby?” said the Major.

“Yes, sir; here it is.” And with that he pulled off his tattered hat, and withdrew a letter which lay concealed within the lining. “’Tis sixpence you ought to be ather givin’ me this mornin’, Major,” continued he, in an insinuating tone of voice; “the devil a less than twenty-one mile it is out of this, not to spake of the danger I run, and the boys out on every side o’ me.”

“And what’s the news up the country, Toby?” asked the Major, as he broke the seal of the letter.

“’Tis talking of a risin’ they do be still, sir—av the praties was in; glory be to God, they say it’ll be a great sayson.”

“For which, Toby—the crops or the croppies?”

“Yes, sir,” replied Toby, with a most provoking look of idiocy. “And you won’t buy Darby, sir?” rejoined he, flourishing the printed placard. “No matter; here’s the whole, full, thrue, and particular account——” And so he turned the angle of the building, and I could hear his voice mingling with the street noises as he wended his way down Dame Street. The Major looked after him and smiled, and brief as was that smile, I saw in it how thoroughly he was duped.

“Come, sir, follow me, if you please,” said he, addressing me.

I mounted a flight of old and neglected stairs, and entered an anteroom, where, having waited for a few seconds, the Major whispered an order to the porter, and passed on to the inner room, leaving me behind.

As Major Barton passed out by one door, the porter

turned the key in the other, and, placing it in his pocket, drew his chair to the window and resumed the newspaper he was reading when we entered. How long I waited I cannot say. My thoughts, though sad ones, chased each other rapidly, and I felt not the time as it passed. Suddenly the door opened, and I heard my name called. I drew a deep breath, like one who felt his fate was in the balance, and entered.

The room, which was plainly furnished, seemed to serve as an office. The green-covered table that stood in the middle was littered with letters and papers, among which a large, heavy-browed, dark-featured man was searching busily as I came in. Behind, and partly beside him, stood Barton, in an attitude of respectful attention, while, with his back to the fire, was a third person, whose age might have been from thirty-five to forty. His dress was in the perfection of the *mode*, his top-boots reaching to the middle of his leg; his coat, of the lightest shade of sky-blue, was lined with white silk; and two watch-chains hung down beneath his buff waistcoat, in the acme of the then fashion. His features were frank and handsome, and, saving a dash of puppyism that gave a character of weakness to the expression, I should deem him a manly, fine-looking fellow.

"So this is your 'Robespierre!' Major, is it?" cried he, bursting into a laugh, as I appeared.

Barton approached nearer to him, and muttered something in a low, mumbling tone, to which the other seemed to pay little, if any attention.

"You are here, sir," said the dark-featured man at the table, holding in his hand a paper as he spoke—"you are here, under a warrant of the Privy Council, charging you with holding intercourse with that rebellious and ill-fated faction who seek to disturb the peace and welfare of this country—disseminating dangerous and wicked doctrines, and being in alliance with France—with France——What's that word, Barton?—to——"

"In two words, young gentleman," said the young man at the fire, "you are charged with keeping very bad company—learning exceedingly unprofitable notions, and incurring very considerable present risk. Now I am not disposed to think that at your age, and with your

respectable connections, either the cause or its associates can have taken a very strong hold of your mind. I am sure that you must have received your impressions, such as they are, from artful and designing persons, who had only their own ends in view when involving you in their plots. If I am justified in this opinion, and if you will pledge me your honour——”

“ I say, Cooke, you can't do this. The warrant sets forth——”

“ Well, well, we'll admit him to bail.”

“ It is notailable, Right Honourable,” said Barton, addressing the large man at the table.

“ Phelan,” said the younger man, turning away in pique, “ we really have matters of more importance than this boy's case to look after.”

“ Boy as he is, sir,” said Barton, obsequiously, “ he was in the full confidence of that notorious French captain for whose capture you offered a reward of one thousand pounds.”

“ You like to run your fox to earth, Barton,” replied the Under-Secretary, calmly, for it was he who spoke.

“ In alliance with France,” continued the dark man, reading from the paper, over which he continued to pore ever since, “ for the propagation—ay, that's it—the propagation of democratic——”

“ Come, come, Browne, never mind the warrant; if he can find bail—say five hundred pounds—for his future appearance, we shall be satisfied.”

Browne, who never took his eyes from the paper, and seemed totally insensible to everything but the current of his own thoughts, now looked up, and, fixing his dark and beetling look upon me, uttered in a deep, low tone,—

“ You see, sir, the imminent danger of your present position, and at the same time the merciful leniency which has always characterized His Majesty's Government—ahem! If, therefore, you will plead guilty to any transportable felony, the grand jury will find true bills——”

“ You mistake, Browne,” said Cooke, endeavouring with his handkerchief to repress a burst of laughter, “ we are going to take his bail.”

“ Bail!” said the other, in a voice and with a look of amazement absolutely comic.

Up to this moment I had not broken silence, but I was unable to remain longer without speaking.

"I am quite ready, sir," said I, resolutely, "to stand my trial for anything laid to my charge. I am neither ashamed of the opinions I profess, nor afraid of the dangers they involve."

"You hear him, sir, you hear him," said Barton, triumphantly, turning towards the Secretary, who bit his lip in disappointment, and frowned on me with a mingled expression of anger and warning. "Let him only proceed, and you'll be quite satisfied, on his own showing, that he cannot be admitted to bail."

"Bail!" echoed the Right Honourable, whose faculties seemed to have stuck fast in the mud of thought, and were totally unable to extricate themselves.

At the same moment, a gentle tap was heard at the door, and the porter entered with a card, which he delivered to the Secretary.

"Let him wait," was the brief reply, as he threw his eyes over it. "Captain Bubbleton," muttered he, between his teeth. "Don't know him."

I started at the name, and felt my cheek flush; he saw it at once.

"You know this gentleman, then?" said he, mildly.

"Yes; to his humanity I am indebted for my life."

"I think I shall be able to show, sir," said Barton, interposing, "that through this Burke's instrumentality a very deep scheme of disaffection is at this moment in operation among the troops in garrison. It was in the barrack at George's Street that I apprehended him."

"You may withdraw, sir," said the Secretary, turning towards me. "Let Captain Bubbleton come in."

As I left the room, the burly Captain entered; but so flurried and excited was he, that he never perceived me, as we passed each other.

I had not been many minutes in the outer room when a loud laugh attracted me, in which I could distinctly recognize the merry cadence of my friend Bubbleton; and shortly after the door was opened, and I was desired to enter.

"You distinctly understand, then, Captain Bubbleton," said Mr. Cooke, "that in accepting the bail in this case, I

I am assuming a responsibility which may involve me in trouble?"

"I have no doubt of it," muttered Barton, between his teeth.

"We shall require two sureties of five hundred pounds each."

"Take the whole myself, by Jove!" broke in Bubbleton, with a flourish of his hand. "In for a penny—eh, Tom?"

"You can't do that, sir," interposed Barton.

The Secretary nodded an assent, and for a moment or two Bubbleton looked nonplused.

"You'll of course have little difficulty as to a co-surety," continued Barton, with a grin. "Burke of 'Ours' is sufficiently popular in the Forty-fifth to make it an easy matter."

"True," cried Bubbleton, "quite true; but in a thing of this kind, every fellow will be so deuced anxious to come forward—a kind of military feeling, you know."

"I understand it perfectly," said Cooke, with a polite bow; "although a civilian, I think I can estimate the *esprit de corps* you speak of."

"Nothing like it, nothing like it, by Jove! I'll just tell you a story—a little anecdote in point. When we were in the Neelgharries, there was a tiger devilish fond of one of ours. Some way or other, Forbes—that was his name——"

"The tiger's?"

"No! the captain's. Forbes had a devilish insinuating way with him—women always liked him—and this tiger used to come in after mess, and walk round where he was sitting, and Forbes used to give him his dinner, just as you might a dog——"

The castle clock struck three just at this moment; the Secretary started up.

"My dear Captain," cried he, putting his hand on Bubbleton's arm, "I never was so sorry in my life; but I must hurry away to the Privy Council. I shall be here, however, at four; and if you will meet me at that time with the other security, we can arrange this little matter at once." So saying, he seized his hat, bowed politely round the room, and left us.

"Come along, Tom," cried Bubbleton, taking me by the arm; "devilish good fellow that; knew I'd tickle him with the tiger; nothing to what I could have told him, however, if he had waited."

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Barton, interposing between us and the door, "Mr. Burke is in custody until the formality at least of a bail be gone through."

"So he is," said Bubbleton; "I forgot all about it. So good-bye, Tom, for half an hour; I'll not be longer, depend on it."

With this he shook me warmly by the hand, bustled out of the room, and hurried downstairs, humming a tune as he went, apparently in capital spirits, while I knew from his manner that the bail he was in search of had about as much existence as the tiger in the Neelgharries.

"You can wait in this room, sir," said Barton, opening the door of a small apartment which had no other exit save through this office.

I sat down in silence and in sorrow of heart, to speculate, as well as I was able, on the consequences of my misfortune. I knew enough of Bubbleton to be certain that all chance of assistance in that quarter was out of the question—the only source he could draw upon being his invention—the only wealth he possessed the riches of his imagination—which had, however, this advantage over any other species of property I ever heard of—the more he squandered it, the more affluent did he become. Time wore on; the clock struck four; and yet no appearance of Bubbleton. Another hour rolled by—no one came near me, and at length, from the perfect stillness without, I believed they had forgotten me.



CHAPTER XVI.

THE BAIL.

SIX o'clock, seven, and even eight struck, and yet no one came. The monotonous tread of the sentry on guard at the Castle-gate, and the occasional challenge to some passing stranger, were the only sounds I heard above the distant hum of the city, which grew fainter gradually as evening fell. At last I heard the sound of a key moving in a lock, the bang of a door, and then came the noise of many voices, as the footsteps mounted the stairs, amid which Bubbleton's was pre-eminently loud. The party entered the room next to where I sat, and, from the tones, I could collect that Major Barton and Mr. Cooke were of the number. Another there was, too, whose voice was not absolutely new or strange to my ears, though I could not possibly charge my memory where I had heard it before.

While I was thus musing, the door opened noiselessly, and Bubbleton entering without a word, closed it behind him, and approached me on tiptoe.

"All right, my boy; they're doing the needful outside; ready in ten minutes; never was such a piece of fortune; found out a glorious fellow; heard of him from Hicks, the money-lender; he'll go security to any amount; knows your family well; knew your father, grandfather, I believe; delighted to meet you; says he'd rather see you than fifty pounds!"

"Who is he, for Heaven's sake?" said I, impatiently; for it was a new thing to me to receive anything like kindness on the score of my father's memory.

"Eh! who is he? He's a kind of a bill-broking, mortgaging, bail-giving, devilish good sort of fellow. I've a notion he'd do a bit of something at three months."

"But his name—what's he called?"

"His name is—let me see—his name is—— But who

cares for his name? He can write it, I suppose, on a stamp, my boy—that's the mark. Bless your heart, I only spoil a stamp when I put my autograph across it—it would be worth prime cost till then. What a glorious thing is youth—unfledged, unblemished youth—to possess a name new to the Jews—a reputation against which no one has 'protested!' Tom Burke, my boy, I envy you. Now, when I write George Frederick Augustus Bubbleton on any bill, warrant, or quittance, straightway there's a grin around the circle—a kind of a d—d impertinent sort of a half-civil smile, as though to say '*nulla bona*,' payable nowhere. But hold! that was a tap at the door—oh, they want us."

So saying, the Captain opened the door and introduced me.

"I say, Tom," cried he, "come here, and thank our kind friend, Mr. — Mr. —"

"Mr. Basset," said I, starting back, as my eyes beheld the pale, sarcastic features of the worthy attorney, who stood at the table, conversing in a low tone with the Under-Secretary.

"Eh! what's the matter?" whispered Bubbleton, as he saw my colour come and go, and perceived that I leaned on a chair for support. "What the devil's wrong now?"

"You've betrayed me to my greatest enemy," said I, in a low, distinct voice.

"Eh! what?—why, you seem to have nothing but foes in the world. Confound it, that's always my luck—my infernal good-nature is everlastingly making a wrong plunge."

"In that case, if I understand the matter aright, the bail is unnecessary," said Mr. Cooke, addressing Basset, who never turned his head to the part of the room where we stood.

"No, sir, it is not necessary. While the law assists me to resume my guardianship of this young gentleman, I am answerable for his appearance."

"The indentures are quite correct," said Barton, as he laid the papers on the table, "as I believe Mr. Basset's statement to be also."

"No bail necessary," interrupted Bubbleton, rubbing his hands pleasantly, "so much the better. Wish them

good evening, Tom, my hearty; we shall be back in time for supper. You wouldn't take an oyster, Mr. Cooke?"

"I thank you very much, but I am unfortunately engaged."

"Not so fast, Captain, I beg you," said Basset, with a most servile but malignant expression in his features. "The habits I would inculcate to my apprentice are not exactly consistent with mess-parties and barrack-suppers."

"Apprentice! apprentice!" said Bubbleton, starting as if stung by a wasp. "Eh! you're surely not—not the—the——"

"Yes, sir; there's the indenture, signed and sealed, if you are desirous to satisfy yourself. The young gentleman himself will not deny his father's instructions concerning him."

I hung down my head, abashed and ashamed. The tears started to my eyes; I turned away to wipe them, and feared to face the others again; I saw that Bubbleton, my only friend, believed I had practised some deceit on him—and how to explain, without disclosing what I dare not! There was a bustle in the room—a sound of voices—the noise of feet descending the stairs; and when I again looked round, they were all gone, save Basset, who was leisurely collecting his papers together, and fastening them with a string. I turned my eyes everywhere, to see if Bubbleton had not remained. But no, he had left me like the rest, and I was alone with the man I most dreaded and disliked of all the world.

"Well, sir," said Basset, as he thrust the papers into the pocket of his greatcoat, "I'm ready now."

"Where to, sir?" replied I, sternly, as he moved to leave the room; for, without thinking of how and why I was to succeed in it, a vague resolution of defiance flitted through my mind.

"To *my* house, sir, or to Newgate, if you prefer it. Don't mistake, young gentleman, for a moment, the position you occupy—you owe your liberation at this moment not to any merits of your own. Your connection with the disaffected and rebellious body is well known: my interest with the Government is your only protection. Again, sir, let me add, that I have no peculiar desire for your com-

pany in my family; neither the habits nor the opinions you have acquired will suit those you'll meet there."

"Why, then, have you interfered with me?" said I, passionately. "Why not have left me to my fate? Be it what it might, it would have been not less acceptable, I assure you, than to become an inmate of your house."

"That question were very easily answered," said he, interrupting me.

"Then, why not do so?"

"Come, come, sir, these are not the terms which are to subsist between us, nor is this the place to discuss our difference. Follow me."

He led the way downstairs as he spoke, and, taking my arm within his, turned into the street. Without a word on either side we proceeded down Parliament Street, and, crossing Essex Bridge, followed the quays for some time, then turning into Stafford Street, we arrived at a house, when having taken a latch-key from his pocket, Basset opened the door and ushered me in, muttering half aloud as he turned the key in the lock, and fastened the bolt, "Safe at last." We turned from the narrow hall into a small parlour, which, from its dingy furniture of writing-desk and stools, I guessed to serve as an office. Here my companion lit a candle from the embers of the fire, and having carefully closed the door he motioned me to a seat.

"I have already told you, sir, that I am not in the least covetous of your company in my house; circumstances, which I may or may not explain hereafter, have led me to rescue you from the disgrace you must eventually have brought upon your family."

"Hold, sir, I have none, save a brother——"

"Well, sir, and your brother's feelings are, I trust, not to be slightly treated—a young gentleman whose position and prospects are of the very highest order."

"You are his agent, I perceive, Mr. Basset," said I, with a significant smile.

"I am, sir," replied he, with a deep flush that mounted even to his forehead.

"Then let me save you all further trouble on my account," said I, calmly. "My brother's indifference to me or my fate has long since absolved me from any

regret I might feel for the consequences which my actions might induce on *his* fortunes. His own conduct must stamp him, as mine must me. I choose to judge for myself, and not even Mr. Basset shall decide for me, although I am well aware his powers of discrimination have had the double advantage of experience on both sides of the question."

As I said this, his face became almost livid, and his white lips quivered with passion. He knew not before that I was acquainted with his history, nor that I knew of his having sold to the Government information which brought his schoolfellow and benefactor to the scaffold.

"Come, come," continued I, gaining courage, as I saw the effect my words produced, "it is not your interest to injure me, however it may be your wish. Is there no arrangement we can come to, mutually advantageous? We shall be but sorry companions. I ought to have some property under my grandfather's will."

"There is, I believe, five hundred pounds," said Basset, with a slow distinctness, as if not rejecting the turn the conversation had taken.

"Well, then, what will you take to cancel that indenture? You don't set a very high value on my services, I suppose?"

"You forget, I perceive," said he, "that I am answerable for your future appearance if called on."

"There was no bail-bond drawn out, no sum mentioned, if I mistake not, Mr. Basset."

"Very true, sir, very true; but I pledged myself to the law adviser—my character is responsible."

"Well, well, let me have two hundred pounds—burn that cursed indenture——"

"Two hundred pounds! Do you fancy, then, that you are in the possession of this legacy? Why, it never may, in all likelihood it never will, be yours—it's only payable on your attaining your majority."

"Give me one hundred pounds, then—give me fifty—let me only be free, at liberty, and not absolutely a beggar on the streets."

Basset leaned his head on the chimney, and seemed sunk in reflection, while I, wound up to the highest pitch of excitement, trod up and down the room, pouring forth

from time to time short and broken sentences, declaratory of my desire to surrender all that I might chance to inherit by every casualty in life, to my last guinea, only let there be no constraint on my actions—no attempt to control my personal liberty.

"I see," cried I, passionately—"I see what hampers you—you fear I may compromise my *family*! It is my brother's fair fame you are thinking of; but away with all dread on that score—I'll leave Ireland—I have long since determined on that."

"Indeed!" said Basset, slowly, as he turned round his head, and looked me full in the face. "Would you go to America, then?"

"To America! no—to France! that shall be the land of my adoption, as it is this moment of all my heart's longings."

His eyes sparkled, and a gleam of pleasure shot across his cold features, as if he caught a glow of the enthusiasm that lit up mine.

"Come," cried he, "I'll think of this—give me till to-morrow, and if you'll pledge yourself to leave Ireland within a week——"

"I'll pledge myself to nothing of the kind," replied I, fiercely. "It is to be free—free in thought as in act, that I would barter all my prospects with you. There must be but one compact between us—it must begin and end here. Take a night if you will to think it over, and to-morrow morning——"

"Well, then, to-morrow morning be it," said he, with more of animation in his tone; "and now to supper."

"To bed, rather," said I, "if I may speak my mind, for rest is what I now stand most in need of."



CHAPTER XVII.

MR. BASSET'S DWELLING.

EXCEPTING the two dingy-looking, dust-covered parlours, which served as office and dining-room, the only portion of Mr. Basset's dwelling untenanted by lodgers were the attics. The large brass plate that adorned the hall-door, setting forth in conspicuous letters, "Anthony Basset, Attorney," gave indeed a most inadequate notion of the mixed population within, whose respectability, in the inverse ratio of their height from the ground, went on growing beautifully less, till it found its culminating point in the host himself, on whose venerable head the light streamed from a cobweb-covered pane in the roof. The stairs were dark and narrow, the walls covered with a dull-coloured old wainscot, that flapped and banged with every foot that came and went, while the windows were defended by strong iron railings, as if anything inside them could possibly demand such means of protection.

I followed Mr. Basset as he led the way up these apparently interminable stairs, till at length the decreasing head-room betokened that we were near the slates. Mumbling a half apology for the *locale*, he introduced me into a long, low attic, where a settle bed, of the humblest pretensions, and a single rush-bottomed chair supporting a basin, were the only articles of furniture. Something like the drop-curtain of a strolling theatre closed up the distance; but this I could only perceive imperfectly by the dim twilight of a dip candle; and in my state of fatigue and weariness, I had little inclination to explore further. Wishing me a good night, and promising that I should be called betimes next morning, Mr. Basset took his leave, while I, overcome by a long day of care and anxiety, threw myself on the bed, and slept far more soundly than I could have believed it were possible for me to do under the roof of Anthony Basset.

The sun was streaming in a rich flood of yellow light

through a small skylight, and playing its merry gambols on the floor when I awoke. The birds, too, were singing; and the hum of the street noises, mellowed by distance, broke not unpleasantly on the ear. It did not take me long to remember where I was, and why. The conversation of the evening before recurred at once to my mind, and hope, stronger than ever before I felt it, filled my heart. It was clear Basset could place little value on such services as mine; and if I could only contrive to make it his interest to part with me, he would not hesitate about it. I resolved that, whatever price he put upon my freedom, if in my power I should pay it. My next plan was to find out, through some of the persons in correspondence with France, the means of reaching that country, in whose military service I longed to enrol myself. Had I but the papers of my poor friend Charles de Meudon, there had been little difficulty in this; but, unfortunately, they were seized by Major Barton on the day of his death, and I had never seen them since.

While I revolved these thoughts within myself I heard the merry notes of a girl's voice, singing, apparently, in the very room with me. I started up and looked about me, and now perceived that what seemed so like a drop-curtain the night before was nothing more or less than a very large patchwork quilt, suspended on a line across the entire attic, from the other side of which came the sounds in question. It was clear, both from the melody and the voice, that she could not be a servant; and somewhat curious to know more of my fair neighbour, I rose gently, and slipping on my clothes, approached the boundary of my territory with noiseless step.

A kind of whistling noise interrupted every now and then the lady's song, and an occasional outbreak of impatience would burst forth in the middle of the "Arrah, will you marry me, dear Alley Croker?" by some malediction on a "black knot," or a broken string. I peeped over the "drop," and beheld the figure of a young, plump, and pretty girl, busily engaged in lacing her stays—an occupation which accounted equally for the noise of the rushing stay-lace and the bit of peevishness I had heard. I quite forgot how inadvisable was the indulgence of my curiosity in my admiration of my fair neighbour, whose buxom



Peeping Tom.

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figure, not the less attractive for the shortness of her drapery, showed itself to peculiar advantage as she bent to one side and the other in her efforts to fasten the impracticable boddice. A mass of rich brown hair, on which the sun was playing, fell over her neck and on her shoulders, and half concealed her round, well-turned arms as they plied their busy task.

"Well, ain't my heart broke with you entirely?" exclaimed she, as a stubborn knot stopped all further progress. At this moment the cord, on which through inadvertence I had leaned somewhat too heavily, gave way, and down came the curtain with a squash to the floor. She sprang back with a bound, and, while a slight but momentary blush flushed her cheek, stared at me half angrily, and then cried out, "Well, I hope you like me?"

"Yes, that I do," said I, readily; "and who wouldn't that saw you?"

Whether it was the *naïveté* of my confession, or my youth, or both, I can't well say, but she laughed heartily at my speech, and threw herself into a chair to indulge her mirth.

"So we were neighbours, it seems," said I.

"And if we were," said she, roguishly, "I think it's a very unceremonious way you've opened the acquaintance."

"You forget, apparently, I haven't left my own territory."

"Well, I'm sure I wish you would, if you're any good at a black knot; my heart and my nails are both broke with one here."

I didn't wait for any more formal invitation, but stepped at once over the frontier, while she, rising from the chair, turned her back towards me, as with her finger she directed me to the most chaotic assemblage of knots, twists, loops, and entanglements I ever beheld.

"And you're Burke, I suppose," cried she, as I commenced my labours.

"Yes, I'm Burke."

"Well, I hope your done with wildness by this time. Uncle Tony tells fine tales of your doings."

"Uncle Tony! So you're Mr. Basset's niece—is that so?"

"You didn't take me for his wife, I hope," said she, again bursting out into laughter.

"In truth, I never thought so well of him as to suppose it."

"Well, well, I'm sure it's little I expected you to look so mild and so quiet; but you needn't pinch me, for all that. Isn't your name Tom?"

"Yes, I hope you'll always call me so."

"Maybe I will. Isn't that done yet?—and there's the milk bell. Uncle will be in a nice passion if I'm not down soon—cut it—cut it at once."

"Now do be patient for a minute or two—it's all right if you stay quiet. I'll try my teeth on it."

"Yes, but you needn't try your lips too," said she, tartly.

"Why, it's the only plan to get your fingers out of the way. I'm sure I never was so puzzled in all my life."

"Nothing like practice, my boy, nothing," cried a merry voice from the door behind me, half choked with laughing, while a muttered anathema, in a deeper tone, followed. I looked back, and there stood Bubbleton, his face florid with laughter, endeavouring to hold back Mr. Basset, whose angry look and flashing eye there was no mistaking.

"Mr. Burke—Burke, I say—Nelly, what does this mean? How came this young gentleman——"

"As to that," said I, interrupting him, and my blood somewhat chafed by his manner, "this piece of trumpery tumbled down when I leaned my arm on it. I had no idea——"

"No, no; to be sure not," broke in Bubbleton, in an ecstasy. "The thing was delicious; such a bit of stage effect. She was there, as it might be, combing her hair, and all that sort of thing. Tom was here, raving about absence and eternal separation. You are an angry father, or uncle—all the same; and I'm Count Neitztachenitz, the old friend and brother-officer of Tom's father. Now, let Miss Nelly——But where is she?—why, she's gone! Eh, and Basset? Basset!—why, he's gone! Come, Tom, don't you go too. I say, my boy, devilish well got up that. You ought to have had a white satin doublet and hose, slashed with pale cherry-coloured ribbons to

match, small hat looped, aigrette and white plume. She was perfect—her leg and foot were three certain rounds of applause from the pit and gallery."

"What nonsense!" said I, angrily; "we weren't playing a comedy."

"Weren't you, though? Well, I'm deuced sorry for it, that's all; but it did look confoundedly like an undress rehearsal."

"Come, come, no foolery, I beg. I'm here in a very sad plight, and this piece of nonsense may not make matters any better. Listen to me, if you can, patiently for five minutes, and give me your advice."

I took him by the arm as I spoke, and leading him from the room, where I saw that everything was only suggesting some piece of scenic effect, and in as few words as I could command, explained how I was circumstanced; omitting, of course, any detail of my political bias, and only stated so much of my desire as implied my wish to be free of my contract with Basset, and at liberty to dispose of myself as I liked in future.

"I see," cried Bubbleton, as I finished; "the old fox has this five hundred pounds of yours."

"No, I didn't say that; I only mean——"

"Well, well, it's all the same. If he hasn't, you know he ought."

"No; that's not essential either."

"No matter, he would if he could; it just comes to the same thing, and you only wish to get clear out of his hands at any cost. Isn't that it?"

"Exactly; you have it all perfectly."

"Bless your heart, boy, there's nothing easier. If I were in your place, should arrange the affair in less than a week. I'd have fits—strong fits—and burn all the papers in the office during the paroxysm. I'd make a pile of deeds, leases, bonds, and settlements in the back yard."

"I don't fancy your plan would be so successful as you flatter yourself," said a dry husky voice behind: "there's rather a stringent law for refractory apprentices, as Mr. Burke may learn." We turned round, and there stood Mr. Basset, with a grin of most diabolical malignity in his by no means pleasant features. "At the same time,"

continued he, "your suggestions are of infinite value, and shall be duly appreciated in the King's Bench."

"Eh—King's Bench! Lord bless you, don't speak of it. Mere trifles—I just threw them out as good hints. I had fifty far better to come. There's the young lady, now—to be sure, he has started that notion himself, so I must not pretend it was mine; but Miss Nelly, I think, Tom——"

"Mr. Basset is well aware," interrupted I, "that I am only desirous to be free and untrammelled—that whatever little means I may derive from my family, I'm willing to surrender all, short of actual beggary, to attain this object—that I intend quitting Ireland at once. If, then, he consent to enter into an arrangement with me, let it be at once, and on the spot. I have no desire, I have no power, to force him by a threat, in case of refusal; but I hope he will make so much of amends to one of whose present desolation and poverty he is not altogether innocent."

"There, there, that's devilish well said; the whole thing is all clear before me. So come along, Basset, you and I will settle all this. Have you got a private room where we can have five minutes' chat together? Tom, wait for me here."

Before either of us could consent or oppose his arrangement, he had taken Basset's arm, and led him downstairs, while I, in a flurry of opposing and conflicting resolves, sat down to think over my fortunes.

Tired at length with waiting, and half suspecting that my volatile friend had forgotten me and all my concerns, I descended to the parlour in hopes to hear something of the pending negotiation. At the head of a long, narrow table sat my fair acquaintance, Miss Nelly, her hair braided very modestly at each side of her pretty face, which had now assumed an almost Quakerish propriety of expression. She was busily engaged in distributing tea to three pale, red-eyed, emaciated men, whose spongy-looking, threadbare garments bespoke to be attorney's clerks: a small imp, a kind of embryo practitioner, knelt before the fire in the act of toasting bread, but followed with his sharp piercing eyes every stir in the apartment, and seemed to watch with malicious pleasure the wry faces around, whenever any undue dilution of the bohea, or any curtailment of the blue milk pressed heavily on the

guests. These were not exactly the circumstances to renew my acquaintance with my fair neighbour, had I been so minded; so having declined her offer of breakfast, I leaned moodily on the chimney-piece, my anxiety to know my fate becoming each instant more painful. Meanwhile, not a word was spoken—a sad, moody silence, unbroken save by the sounds of eating, pervaded all, when suddenly the door of the front parlour was flung open, and Bubbleton's pleasant voice was heard as he talked away unceasingly; in an instant he entered, followed by Basset, over whose hard countenance a shade of better nature seemed to pass.

“In that case,” cried the Captain, “I'm your man, not that I'm anything of a performer at breakfast or dinner; supper's rather my forte—an odour of a broiled bone at three in the morning, a herring smeared with chetna and grilled with brandy, two hundred of small oysters, a few hot ones to close with, a glass of Seltzer dashed with Hollands for health, and then any number you like of glasses of hot brandy-and-water afterwards for pleasure.”

While Bubbleton ran on in this fashion, he had broken about half a dozen eggs into the slop basin, and seasoning the mess with pepper and vinegar, was busily engaged in illustrating the moderation of his morning appetite.

“Try a thing like this, Tom,” cried he, not defining how it was to be effected under the circumstances, while he added in a whisper, “your affair's all right.”

These few words brought courage to my heart; and I ventured to begin the breakfast that had lain untasted before me.

“I think, Mr. Burke,” said Basset, as soon as he recovered from the surprise Bubbleton's mode of breakfasting had excited—“I think and trust that all has been arranged to your satisfaction.” Then turning to the clerks, who ate away without even lifting their heads, “Mr. Muggridge, you will be late at the Masters' Office; Jones, take that parcel to Henet; Kit, carry my bag up to the Courts.”

Miss Nelly did not wait for the part destined for her, but with a demure face rose from the table and left the room, giving me, however, one sly glance as she passed my chair that I remembered for many a day after.

"You'll excuse me, gentlemen, if I am pressed for time this morning—a very particular case comes on in the Common Pleas."

"Never speak of it, my dear fellow," said Bubbleton, who had just addressed himself to a round of spiced beef, "business has its calls just as pleasure has, ay, and appetite too. That would make an excellent bit of supper, with some mulled port, after a few rubbers of shorts."

Basset paid little attention to this speech, but, turning to me, continued:—

"You mentioned your intention of leaving Ireland, I think; might I ask where you have decided on—from where? Is it possible that your brother——"

"My brother's anxieties on my account, Mr. Basset, can scarcely be very poignant, and deserve no particular respect or attention at my hands. I suppose that this morning has concluded all necessary intercourse between us; and if you have satisfied my friend Captain Bubbleton——"

"Perfectly, perfectly—another cup of tea, if you please—yes, nothing could be more gratifying than Mr. Basset's conduct—you are merely to sign the receipt for the legacy, and he hands you over one hundred pounds; isn't that it?"

"Yes, quite correct; my bill for one hundred at three months."

"That's what I mean; but surely you're not done breakfast—why, Tom, you've eaten nothing. I have been picking away this half hour, just to encourage you a bit. Well, well, I lunch in Stephen's Green at three, so here goes."

Mr. Basset now took from his pocket-book some papers, which, having glanced his eye over, he handed to me.

"This is a kind of acknowledgment, Mr. Burke, for the receipt of a legacy to which you could be only entitled on attaining your majority; here are your indentures to me, and this is my acceptance for one hundred pounds."

"I am content," said I, eagerly, as I seized the pen. The thought of my liberty alone filled my mind, and I cared little for the conditions, provided I secured *that*.

Basset proffered his hand; I was in no humour to reject anything that even simulated cordiality; I shook it heartily. Bubbleton followed my example, and, having pledged himself to see more of his pleasant acquaintance, thrust his

arm through mine, and bustled out, adding, in a tone loud enough to be overheard, "Made a capital fight of it—told him you were a Defender, a United Irishman, a Peep-o'-day Boy, and all that sort of thing—devilish glad to get rid of you, even on Miss Nelly's account.' And so he rattled away without ceasing, until we found ourselves at the George's Street Barracks, my preoccupation of mind preventing my even having remarked what way we came.



CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS.

I WAS not sorry to find that Miss Bubbleton did not respond to the noisy summons of the Captain, as he flourished about from one room to the other, making the quarters echo to the sweet name of "Anna Maria." "Saladin," "Grimes," "Peter," were also shouted out unsuccessfully; and with a fierce menace against various grooms of the chambers, waiting-men, and lacqueys, who happily were still unborn, Bubbleton flung himself into a seat, and began to conjecture what had become of the inhabitants.

"She's paying a morning call—gone to see the Duchess—that's it, or perhaps she's looking over that suit of pearls I bought yesterday at Gallon's—pretty baubles, but dear at eight hundred pounds. Never mind, what's money for, eh, Tom?"

As he looked at me for a reply, I drew my chair closer towards him, and, assuming as much of importance as my manner could command, I besought his attention for a moment. Hitherto, partly from my own indecision, partly from his flighty and volatile bearing, I never had an opportunity either to explain my real position or my political

sentiments, much less my intentions for the future. The moment had at length arrived, and I resolved to profit by it; and, in as few words as I was able, gave a brief narrative of my life, from the hour of my father's death to the day in which I fell into his own hands in Dublin, only omitting such portions as might, by the mention of names, compromise others concerned.

Nothing could possibly be more attentive than he was during the entire detail. He leaned his head on his hand, and listened with eager curiosity to all my scrapes and difficulties, occasionally nodding in assent, and now evincing by his excited air his desire to learn further; and when I at last wound up by avowing my long-cherished desire to enter the French service, he sat perfectly silent, and seemed to reflect gravely on the whole.

"I say, Tom," said he, at length, as he stared me full in the face, and laid his hand impressively on my knee, "there's good stuff in that—excellent stuff! depend upon it!"

"Good stuff! what do you mean?" said I, in amazement.

"I mean," replied he, "there's bone in it, sinew in it, substance in it—there are some admirable situations too. How Fulham would come out in Tony Basset—brown shorts, white stockings, high shoes and buckles—his own very costume; and there's that little thing, Miss Booth, for Nelly, give her a couple of songs—ballad airs take best; Williams should be Barton; a devilish fine villain in coarse parts, Williams. I think I see him stealing along by the flats with his soldiers to the attack. Then the second act should open—interior of hut—peasants round a table—eating always successful on the stage—nothing like seeing a fat fellow bolting hard eggs, and blustering out unpronounceable jokes over a flagon of coloured water. You, by right, should have your own part—splendid thing—devilish fine, your sensations when the cabin was on fire, and the fellows were prodding about with their bayonets to discover you."

"And who's to perform Captain Bubbleton?" asked I, venturing for once to humour his absurdity.

"Eh?—oh! there's nothing for me, no marked feature, nothing strong, nothing characteristic. That has been through life my greatest, my very highest ambition—that

no man should ever detect by anything in my manner, my dress, or my style of conversation, that I was not John Nokes, or Peter Styles. You'll meet me at a dinner-party, Tom, you'll converse with me, drink with me, we'll sit the evening together, grow intimate—perhaps you'll borrow fifty pounds of me—and yet I'd wager another, you'd never guess that I rode a hippopotamus across the Ganges after tiffin one day, to pay my respects to the Governor-General. That, let me tell you, Tom, is the very proudest boast a man can make. Do you see that scar? It looks nothing now—that was a bite from a ferocious boa; the villain got into my room before breakfast, he had eaten my chokadar—a fellow I was very fond of——”

“Ah, I remember you mentioned that to me. And now to come back to my dull story, to which, I assure you, however dramatic you may deem it, I'd prefer adding an act or so before it comes before the world. I intend to leave this to-morrow.”

“No, no, you mustn't think of it, yet awhile. Why, my dear fellow, you've a hundred pounds—only think of that! twenty will bring you to Paris; less, if you choose. I once travelled from Glugdumuck to the Ghauts of Bunderamud for half a rupee—put my elephants on three biscuits a day—explained to them in Hindostanee—a most expressive language—that our provisions had fallen short—that on our arrival all arrears of grub should be made up. They tossed up their trunks thus in token of assent, and on we marched. Well, when we came to Helgie, there was no water——”

“Very true,” interrupted I, half in despair at the torrent of story-telling I had got involved in; “but you forget I have neither elephants, nor camels, nor coolies, nor chokadars—I'm a mere adventurer with, except yourself, not a friend in the world.”

“Then why not join us?” cried the ever-ready Captain. “We are to have our orders for foreign service in a few weeks—you've only to volunteer; you've money enough to buy your kit. When you're fairly in, it's only writing to your brother. Besides, something always turns up; that's my philosophy. I rarely want anything I don't find means to obtain, somehow or other.”

“No,” said I, resolutely, “I will never join the service

of a country which has inflicted such foul wrong on my native land."

"All stuff and nonsense!" cried Bubbleton. "Who cares the deuce of clubs about politics? When you're my age, you'll find that if you're not making something of politics, they'll make very little of you. I'd as soon sell figs for my grocer, or snuff for my tobacconist, as I'd bother my head governing the kingdom for Billy Pitt; he's paid for it—that's his business, not mine. No, no, my boy, join us—you shall be '*Burke of Ours*'—we'll have a glorious campaign among the Yankees. I'll teach you the Seneca language, and we'll have a ramble through the Indian settlements. Meanwhile, you dine to-day at the mess; to-morrow, we pic-nic at the Dargle; next day we—what the deuce is next day to be?—oh, yes! next day we all dine with you. Nothing stiff or formal—a snug, quiet thing for sixteen—I'll manage it all."

Here was an argument there was no resisting, so I complied at once, comforting myself with a silent vow, come what might, I'd leave Ireland the day after my dinner-party.

Under whatever guise, with what history of my rank, wealth, and family influence, Bubbleton thought proper to present me to his brother officers, I cannot say; but nothing could possibly be more kind, or even more cordial, than their reception of me; and although I had some difficulty in replying to questions put under mistaken notions of my position and intentions, I readily followed, as far as I was able, the line suggested by my imaginative friend, whose representations, I suspected, would be received with a suitable limitation by his old associates.

There is, perhaps, no species of society so striking and so captivating to the young man entering on life as that of a military mess. The easy, well-bred intimacy, that never degenerates into undue familiarity—the good-humoured, playful raillery, that never verges on coarseness or severity—the happy blending of old men's wisdom and young men's buoyancy—are all very attractive features of social intercourse, even independently of the stronger interest that invests the companionship of men whose career is arms. I felt this, and enjoyed it, too, not the less pleasantly that I discovered no evidence of that violent partisan

feeling I had been led to believe was the distinguishing mark of the Royalist soldier. If, by chance, any allusion was made to the troubles of the period, it was invariably done rather in a tone of respect for mistaken and ill-directed political views, than in reprehension of disloyalty and rebellion; and when I heard the dispassionate opinions, and listened to the mild counsels of these men, whom I had always believed to be the veriest tyrants and oppressors, I could scarcely credit my own senses, so utterly opposed were my impressions and my experience. One only of the party evinced an opposite feeling. He was a pale, thin, rather handsome man, of about five-and-twenty, who had lately joined them from a dragoon regiment, and who, by sundry little inuendoes, was ever bringing uppermost the preference he evinced for his former service, and his ardent desire to be back again in the cavalry.

Captain Montague Crofts was, indeed, the only exception I witnessed to the almost brotherly feeling that prevailed in the Forty-fifth. Instead of identifying himself with the habits and opinions of his brother officers, he held himself studiously apart. Regarding his stay in the regiment like a period of probation, he seemed resolved to form neither intimacies nor friendships, but to wait patiently for the time of his leaving the corps to emancipate himself from a society below his caste.

The cold, repulsive, steady stare, the scarcely bowed head, the impassive silence with which he heard the words of Bubbleton's introduction of me, formed a strong contrast with the warm cordiality of the others; and though at the time little disposed to criticize the manner of any one, and still less to be dissatisfied with anything, I conceived from the moment a dislike to Captain Crofts, which I felt to increase with every minute I spent in his company. The first occasion which suggested this dislike on my part was, from observing that while Bubbleton—whose historical accuracy, or blind adherence to reality, no one in the corps thought of requiring—narrated some of his incredible adventures, Crofts, far from joining in the harmless mirth which such tales created, invariably took delight in questioning and cross-questioning the worthy Captain, quoting him against himself, and playing off a hundred tricks, which, however smart and witty in

a law court, are downright rudeness when practised in society. Bubbleton, it is true, saw nothing in all this save the natural interest of a good listener—but the others did; and it was quite clear to me, that while one was the greatest favourite in the regiment, the other had not a single friend amongst them. To me, Crofts manifested the most perfect indifference—not ever mixing himself in any conversation in which I bore a part. He rarely turned his head towards that part of the table at which I sat; and by an air of haughty superciliousness gave me plainly to understand that our acquaintance, though confessedly begun, was to proceed no further. I cannot say how happy I felt to learn that one I had so much cause to dislike was a violent aristocrat, an ultra-Tory—a most uncompromising denouncer of the Irish Liberal party, and an out-and-out advocate of severe and harsh measures towards the people. He never missed an opportunity for the enunciation of such doctrines, which, whatever might be the opinions of the listeners, there was, at the time I speak of, no small risk in gainsaying, and this immunity did Crofts enjoy to his heart's content.

Slight as these few reminiscences of the mess are, they are the called-up memories of days not to be forgotten by me. For now, what with my habitual indecision on the one hand, and Bubbleton's solicitations on the other, I continued to linger on in Dublin, leading the careless, easy life of those about me, joining in all the plots for amusement which the capital afforded, and mixing in every society to which my military friends had access. Slender as were my resources, they sufficed, in the eyes of all who knew not their limit, to appear abundant. Crofts was the only rich man in the regiment; and my willingness to enter into every scheme of pleasure, regardless of cost, impressed them all with the notion that Bubbleton for once was right, and that "Burke was a kind of west-country Cræsus," invaluable to the regiment.

Week after week rolled on, and still did I find myself a denizen of George's Street. The silly routine of the barrack life filled all my thoughts, save when the waning condition of my purse would momentarily turn them towards the future; but these moments of reflection came

but seldom, and at last came not at all. It was autumn—the town almost divested of its inhabitants, at least of all who could leave it; and along the parched, sun-burnt streets a stray jingle or a noddy was rarely seen to pass. The squares, so lately crowded with equipages and cavalcades of horsemen, were silent and deserted; the closed shutters of every house, and the grass-grown steps, vouched for the absence of the owners. The same dreamy lethargy that seemed to rest over the deserted city appeared to pervade everything; and save a certain subdued activity among the officials of the Castle—a kind of groundswell movement that boded something important—there was nothing stirring. The great measure of the “Union,” which had been carried on the night of the riots, had, however, annihilated the hopes of the Irish Liberal party; and many who once had taken a leading part in politics had now deserted public life for ever.

They with whom I associated cared but little for these things. There were but two or three Irish in the regiment, and they had long since lost all their nationality in the wear and tear of the service; so that I heard nothing of what occupied the public mind, and lived on in the very midst of the threatening hurricane, in a calm as deep as death itself.

I had seen neither Barton nor Basset since the day of my leave-taking; and, stranger still, never could meet with Darby, who seemed to have deserted Dublin. The wreck of the party he belonged to seemed now effectually accomplished, and the prospect of Irish independence was lost, as it seemed, for ever.

I was sitting one evening in the window of Bubbleton's quarters, thinking over these things, not without self-reproach for the life I was leading, so utterly adverse to the principles I had laid down for my guidance. I thought of poor De Meudon, and all his ambitious dreams for my success, and I felt my cheek flush with shame for my base desertion of the cause to which, with his dying breath, he devoted me. I brought up in memory those happy evenings, as we wandered through the fields, talking over the glorious campaigns of Italy, or speculating on the mighty changes we believed yet before us; and then I thought of the reckless orgies in which my present

life was passed. I remembered how his full voice would falter when one great name fell from his lips; and with what reverence he touched his chapeau as the word "Bonaparte" escaped from him! And how my heart thrilled to think of an enthusiasm that could light up the dying embers of a broken heart, and make it flash out in vivid brilliancy once more! and longed to feel as he did.

For the first time for some weeks I found myself alone. Bubbleton was on guard; and though I had promised to join him at supper, I lingered at home, to think and ponder over the past. I scarcely dared to face the future. It was growing dusky. The richly golden arch of an autumn moon could be seen through the hazy mist of that half frost which is at this season the sure harbinger of a hot day on the morrow. The street noises had gradually died away, and, save the distant sound of a ballad singer, whose mournful cadence fell sadly on the ear, I heard nothing.

Without perceiving it, I found myself listening to the doggerel of the minstrel, who, like most of her fellows of the period, was celebrating the means that had been used by Government to carry their favourite measure—the union with England. There was, indeed, very little to charm the ear or win the sense, in either the accent or the sentiment of the melody; yet somehow she had contrived to collect a pretty tolerable audience, who moved slowly along with her down the street, and evinced by many an outburst of enthusiasm how thoroughly they relished the pointed allusions of the verse, and how completely they enjoyed the dull satire of the song.

As they approached the barracks, the procession came to a halt, probably deeming that so valuable a lesson should not be lost to His Majesty's service; and, forming into a circle round the singer, a silence was commanded, when, with that quavering articulation so characteristic of the tribe, and that strange quality of voice that seems to alternate between a high treble and a deep bass, the lady began:—

"Don't be crowdin' an me that a way. There it is now —ye're tearin' the cloak off the back o' me! Divil receive the note I'll sing, if ye don't behave! And look at his honour up there, with a tenpenny bit in the heel of his

fist for me. The Lord reward your purty face—'tis yourself has the darlin' blue eyes! Bad scran to yez, ye blaggards—look at my elegant bonnet the way you've made it!"

"Arrah! rise the tune, and don't be blarneying the young gentleman," said a voice from the crowd; and then added, in a lower but very audible tone, "Them chaps hasn't a farthin' beyond their pay—three and ninepence a day, and find themselves in pipeclay!"

A rude laugh followed this insolent speech; and the ballad-singer, whose delay had only been a *ruse* to attract a sufficient auditory, then began to a very well-known air—

"Come hither, M.P.'s, and I'll tell
 My advice, and I'm sure you'll not mock it:
 Whoe'er has a country to sell,
 Need never want gold in his pocket.
 Your brother a bishop shall be—
 Yourself—if you only will make a
 Voice in our ma-jo-rity—
 We'll make you chief judge in Jamaica.
 Tol, lol de rol, tol de rol lay!"

The mob-chorus here broke in, and continued with such hearty enthusiasm, that I lost the entire of the next verse in the tumult.

"Your father, they say, is an ass,
 And your mother, not noted for knowledge;
 But he'll do very well at Madras,
 And she shall be provost of college.
 Your aunt, lady's-maid to the Queen;
 And Bill, if he'll give up his rakin',
 And not drunk in day-time be seen,
 I'll make him a rosy archdeacon.
 Tol, lol de rol, tol de rol lay!"

"A jollier set ne'er was seen,
 Than you'll be, when freed from your callin',
 With an empty house in College Green—
 What an elegant place to play ball in.
 Ould Foster stand by with his mace,
 He'll do mighty well for a marker;
 John Toler——"

"Here's the polis!" said a gruff voice from the crowd; and the word was repeated from mouth to mouth in every

accent of fear and dread, while in an instant all took to flight, some dashing down obscure lanes and narrow alleys, others running straight onwards towards Dame Street, but all showing the evident apprehension they felt at the approach of these dreaded officials. The ballad-singer alone did not move. Whether too old or too infirm to trust to speed, or too much terrified to run, I know not; but there she stood, the last cadence of her song still dying on her lips, while the clattering sounds of men advancing rapidly were heard in the distant street.

I know not why, some strange momentary impulse, half pity, half caprice, moved me to her rescue, and I called out to the sentry, "Let that woman pass in!" She heard the words, and with an activity greater than I could have expected, sprang into the barrack-yard, while the police passed eagerly on in vain pursuit of their victims.

I remained motionless in the window-seat, watching the now silent street, when a gentle tap came to my door. I opened it, and there stood the figure of the ballad singer, her ragged cloak gathered closely across her face with one hand, while with the other she held the bundle of printed songs, her only stock-in-trade.



CHAPTER XIX.

THE QUARREL.

WHILE I stood gazing at the uncouth and ragged figure before me, she pushed rudely past, and shutting the door behind her, asked, in a low whisper, "Are ye alone?" and then, without waiting for a reply, threw back the tattered bonnet that covered her head, and, removing a wig of long black hair, stared steadfastly at me.

"Do you know me, now?" said the hag, in a voice of almost menacing eagerness.

"What!" cried I, in amazement, "it surely cannot be—— Darby, is this really you?"

"Ye may well say it," replied he, bitterly. "Ye had time enough to forget me since we met last; and 'tis thinking twice your grand friends the officers would be, before they'd put their necks where mine is now to see you. Read that"—as he spoke, he threw a ragged and torn piece of printed paper on the table—"read that; and you'll see there's five hundred pounds of blood-money to the man that takes me. Ay, and here I stand this minit in the king's barrack, and walked fifty-four miles this blessed day just to see you and speak to you once more. Well, well"—he turned away his head while he said this, and wiping a starting tear from his red eye-ball, he added, "Master Tom, 'tis myself would never b'lieve ye done it."

"Did what?" said I, eagerly; "what have I ever done that you should charge me thus?"

But Darby heard me not; his eyes were fixed on vacancy, and his lips moved rapidly as though he were speaking to himself. "Ay," said he, half aloud, "true enough, 'tis the gentlemen that betrayed us always—never came good of the cause where they took a part. But you"—here he turned full round, and grasping my arm, spoke directly to me—"you that I loved better than my own kith and kin, that I thought would one day be a pride

and glory to us all—you that I brought over myself to the cause——”

“And when have I deserted—when have I betrayed it?”

“When did you desert it?” repeated he, in a tone of mocking irony. “Tell me the day and hour ye came here—tell me the first time ye sat down among the red butchers of King George, and I’ll answer ye that. Is it here you ought to be? Is this the home for him that has a heart for Ireland? I never said you betrayed us; others said it—but I stood to it, ye never did that. But what does it signify? ’Tis no wonder ye left us; we were poor and humble people, we had nothing at heart but the good cause——”

“Stop!” cried I, maddened by this taunt, “what could I have done? Where was my place?”

“Don’t ask me. If your own heart doesn’t teach thee, how can I? But it’s over now—the day is gone, and I must take to the road again. My heart is lighter since I seen you, and it will be lighter again when I give you this warnin’—God knows if you’ll mind it. You think yourself safe now since you joined the sodgers—you think they trust you, and that Barton’s eye isn’t on ye still—there isn’t a word you say isn’t noted down—not a man you spake to isn’t watched! You don’t know it, but I know it. There’s more go to the gallows in Ireland over their wine, than with the pike in their hands. Take care of your friends, I say.”

“You wrong them, Darby, and you wrong me. Never have I heard from one here a single word that could offend the proudest heart among us.”

“Why would they?—what need of it? Ar’n’t we down, down—ar’n’t we hunted like wild beasts? is the roof left to shelter us? dare we walk the roads? dare we say, ‘God save ye!’ when we meet, and not be tried for pass words? It’s no wonder they pity us—the hardest heart must melt sometimes.”

“As to myself,” said I—for there was no use in attempting to reason with him further—“my every wish is with the cause as warmly as on the day we parted; but I look to France——”

“Ay, and why not? I remember the time your eye

flashed and your cheek grew another colour when you spoke of that."

"Yes, Darby," said I, after a pause; "and I had not been here now, but that the only means I possessed of forwarding myself in the French service are unfortunately lost to me."

"And what was that?" interrupted he, eagerly.

"Some letters which the poor Captain de Meudon gave me," said I, endeavouring to seem as much at ease as I could. Darby stooped down as I spoke, and, ripping open the lining of his cloak, produced a small parcel fastened with a cord, saying,—

"Are these what you mean?"

I opened it with a trembling hand, and, to my inexpressible delight, discovered Charles's letter to the head of the *Ecole Polytechnique*, together with a letter of credit and two cheques on his banker. The note to his sister was not, however, among them.

"How came you by these papers, Darby?" inquired I, eagerly.

"I found them on the road Barton travelled, the same evening you made your escape from the yeomanry—you remember that? They were soon missed, and an orderly was sent back to search for them. Since that, I've kept them by me; and it was only yesterday that I thought of bringing them to you, thinking you might know something about them."

"There's a mark on this one," said I, still gazing on the paper in my hand—"it looks like blood."

"If it is, it's mine, then," said Darby, doggedly; and, after a pause, he continued, "the soldier galloped up the very minute I was stooping for the papers. He called out to me to give them up; but I pretended not to hear, and took a long look round to see what way I could escape where his horse couldn't follow me; but he saw what I was at, and the same instant his sabre was in my shoulder, and the blood running hot down my arm. I fell on my knees; but, if I did, I took this from my breast"—here he drew forth a long-barrelled rusty pistol—"and shot him through the neck."

"Was he killed?" said I, in horror at the coolness of the recital.

"Sorrow one o' me knows. He fell on his horse's mane, and I saw the beast gallop with him up the road with his arms hanging at each side of the neck; and then I heard a crash, and I saw that he was down, and the horse was dragging him by the stirrup; but the dust soon hid him from my sight, and, indeed, I was growing weak, too, so I crept into the bushes until it was dark, and then got down to Glencree."

The easy indifference with which he spoke, the tone of coolness in which he narrated this circumstance, thrilled through me far more painfully than the most passionate description; and I stood gazing on him with a feeling of dread, that, unhappily, my features but too plainly indicated. He seemed to know what was passing in my mind, and, as if stung by what he deemed my ingratitude for the service he had rendered me, his face grew darkly red, the swollen veins stood out thick and knotted in his forehead, his livid lips quivered, and he said in a thick, guttural voice,—

"Maybe ye think I murdered him?" And then, as I made no answer, he resumed, in a different tone, "And, faix, ye warn't long larnin' their lessons. But, hear me, now: there never was a traitor to the cause had a happy life, or an easy death; there never was one betrayed us, but we were revenged on him or his. I don't think ye're come to *that* yet; for, if I did, by the mortal—" As he pronounced the last word, in a tone of the fiercest menace, the sound of many voices talking without, and the noise of a key turning in the lock, broke in upon our colloquy, and Darby had scarcely time to resume his disguise, when Bubbleton entered, followed by three of his brother officers, all speaking together, and in accents that evidently betokened their having drunk somewhat freely.

"I tell you, again and again, the diamond wins it. But here we are," cried Bubbleton; "and now for a pack of cards, and let's decide the thing at once."

"You said you'd bet fifty, I think?" drawled out Crofts, who was unquestionably the most sober of the party. "But what have we here?" At this instant his eye fell upon Darby, who had quietly ensconced himself behind the door, and hoped to escape unseen. "Eh, what's this, I say?"

“What!” cried Bubbleton, “what do I see?—a nymph with bright and flowing hair—a hag like Hecuba, by Jove! Tom Burke, my man, how comes the damsel here?”

“’Tis Kitty, ould Kitty Cole, your honour. The young gentleman was buying a ballad from me, the Heavens prosper him!” said Darby.

“Nothing treasonous, I hope—no disloyal effusion, Tom; no scandal about Queen Elizabeth, my boy, eh?”

“Come, old lady,” said Cradock, “let’s have the latest novelty of the Liberty.”

“Yes,” said Bubbleton, “strike the harp in praise of ——Confound the word!”

“Hang the old crone!” broke in Hilliard. “Here are the cards. The game stands thus: a spade is led—you’ve got none; hearts are trumps.”

“No, you mistake; the diamond’s the trump,” said Cradock.

“I cry halt,” said Crofts, holding up both his hands; “the first thing is, what’s the bet?”

“Anything you like,” cried Bubbleton; “fifty—a hundred—five hundred.”

“Be it then five hundred; I take you,” said Crofts, coolly, taking a memorandum-book from his pocket.

“No, no,” interposed Hilliard; “Bubbleton, you shan’t do any such thing; five—ten—twenty, if you wish, but I’ll not stand by at such a wager.”

“Well, then, if twenty be as much as you have got permission to bet,” replied Crofts, insolently, “there’s *my* stake.” So saying he threw a note on the table, and looked over at Bubbleton, as if awaiting his doing the same.

I saw my poor friend’s embarrassment, and, without stirring from my place, slipped a note into his hand in silence; a squeeze of his fingers replied to me, and the same instant he threw the crumpled piece of paper down, and cried out, “Now for it—decide the point.”

Crofts at once drew his chair to the table, and began with the utmost coolness to arrange the cards; while the others, deeply interested in the point at issue, looked on without speaking. I thought this a good opportunity for Darby to effect his escape, and, raising my hand noise-

lessly, I pointed to the door. Darby, who had been only waiting for the fortunate moment, stole quietly towards it; but, while his hand was on the lock, Crofts lifted his eyes towards me, and then throwing them half round, intimated at once that he observed the manœuvre. The blood suffused my face and temples, and though I saw the door close behind the piper, I could not recover from my embarrassment, or the fear that pressed on me lest Crofts should have penetrated the secret of Darby's disguise, and augured from the fact something to my discredit.

"The game is now arranged," said he. "The spade being led here, the second player follows suit, the third, having none, trumps the card, and is overtrumped by the last in play; the trick is lost, therefore, and, with it, the game."

"No, no," interrupted Bubbleton, "you mistake altogether; the diamond—no, the heart—I mean the—the—— what the deuce is it? I say, Cradock, I had it all correct a minute ago—how is it, old fellow?"

"Why, you've lost, that's all," said the other, as he looked intently on the table, and seemed to consider the point.

"Yes, Bubbleton, there's no doubt about it—you've lost—we forgot all about the last player," said Hilliard.

A violent knocking at the outer door drowned the voices of all within, while a gruff voice shouted out,—

"Captain Bubbleton, the grand round is coming up Parliament-Street."

Bubbleton snatched up his sword, and dashing through the room, was followed by the others in a roar of laughter. Crofts alone remaining behind, proceeded leisurely to open the folded piece of bank paper that lay before him, while I stood opposite unable to take my eyes from him. Slowly unfolding the note, he flattened it with his hand, and then proceeded to read aloud, "*Payez au porteur la somme de deux mille livres*——"

"I beg pardon," interrupted I; "there's a mistake there—that belongs to me."

"I thought as much," replied Crofts, with a very peculiar smile—"I scarcely supposed my friend Bubbleton had gone so far."

“There’s the sum, sir,” said I, endeavouring to control my temper, and only eager to regain possession of what would at once have compromised me, if discovered. “This is what Captain Bubbleton lost—twenty pounds, if I mistake not.”

“I must entreat your pardon, sir,” said Crofts, folding up the French *billet de banque*. “My wager was not with you, nor can I permit you to pay it. This is at present *my* property, and remains so until Captain Bubbleton demands it from me.”

I was struck dumb by the manner in which these words were spoken. It was clear to me, that not only he suspected the disguise of the ballad-singer, but that by the discovery of the French note he connected his presence with its being in my possession. Rousing myself for the effort, I said, “You force me, sir, to speak of what nothing short of the circumstance could have induced me to allude to. It was I gave Captain Bubbleton that note. I gave it in mistake, for this one.”

“I guessed as much, sir,” was the cool answer of Crofts, as he placed the note in his pocket-book and clasped it; “but I cannot permit your candid explanation to alter the determination I have already come to—even had I not the stronger motive, which as an officer in His Majesty’s pay I possess, to inform the Government, on such infallible evidence, how deeply interested our French neighbours are in our welfare, when they supply us with a commodity which report says is scarce enough among themselves.”

“Do not suppose, sir, that your threat—for as such I understand it—has any terror for me; there is, it’s true, another whose safety might be compromised by any step you might take in this affair; but when I tell you that it is one who never did, never could have injured you, and, moreover, that nothing treasonous or disloyal lies beneath your discovery——”

“You are really taking a vast deal of trouble, Mr. Burke,” said he, stopping me with a cold smile; “which I am forced to say is unnecessary. Your explanation of how this *billet de banque* came into your possession may be required elsewhere, and will, I am certain, meet with every respect and attention. As for me, an humble captain, with only one principle to sustain me, one clue to guide

me, in what I am disposed to consider a question of some importance, I shall certainly ask advice of others better able to direct me."

"You refuse, then, sir, to restore me what I have assured you is mine?"

"And what I have no doubt whatever you are correct in calling so," added he contemptuously.

"And you persist in the refusal?" said I, in a voice which unhappily betrayed more temper than I had yet shown.

"Even so, sir," said he, moving towards the door.

"In that case," said I, springing before him, and setting my back against it, "you don't leave this room until, in the presence of a third party, I care not who he be, I have told you somewhat more of my opinion of you than it is necessary I should say now." The insulting expression of Crofts' features changed suddenly as I spoke, the colour left his cheek, and he became as pale as death; his eye wandered round the room with an uncertain look, and then was fixed steadfastly on the door, against which I stood firmly planted. At length his face recovered its wonted character, and he said, in a cool, distinct manner,—

"Your difficulties have made you bold, sir."

"Not more bold than you'll find me whenever you think fit to call on me; but perhaps I am wrong for suggesting a test, which report, at least, says Captain Crofts has little predilection for."

"Insolent cub!" said he, half drawing his sword from the scabbard, and as hastily replacing it when he perceived that I never moved a muscle in my defence, but stood as if inviting his attack. "Let me pass, sir," cried he, impetuously; "stand by this instant."

I made no reply, but, crossing my arms on my breast, stared at him firmly as before. He had now advanced within a foot of me, his face purple with passion, and his hands trembling with rage.

"Let me pass, I say," shouted he, in an accent that boded his passion had completely got the ascendant; at the same instant he seized me by the collar, and, fixing his grip firmly in my clothes, prepared to hurl me from the spot. The moment had now come that for some minutes past I had been expecting, and with my open

hand I struck him on the cheek, but so powerfully, that he reeled back with the stroke. A yell of rage burst from him, and in an instant his sword leaped from the scabbard, and he darted fiercely at me. I sprang to one side, and the weapon pierced the door and broke off short; still more than half the blade remained; and with this he flew towards me. One quick glance I gave to look for something which might serve to arm me, and the same moment the sharp steel pierced my side, and I fell backwards with the shock, carrying my antagonist along with me. The struggle was now a dreadful one; for while he endeavoured to withdraw the weapon from the wound, my hands were on his throat, and in his strained eyeballs and livid colour might be seen that a few seconds more must decide the contest; a sharp pang shot through me, just then a hot gush of warm blood ran down my side, and I saw above me the shining steel, which he was gradually shortening in his hand, before he ventured to strike; a wild cry broke from me, while at the instant, with a crash, the door of the room fell forward, torn from its hinges; a heavy foot approached, and the blow of a strong arm felled Crofts to the earth, where he lay stunned and senseless. In a second I was on my feet; my senses were reeling and uncertain, but I could see that it was Darby who came to my rescue, and who was now binding a sash round my wound to stanch the blood.

“Now for it—life or death’s on it now,” said he, in a low but distinct whisper; “wipe the blood from your face, and be calm as you can when you’re passing the sentry.”

“Is he——” I dared not speak the word as I looked on the still motionless body that lay before me. Darby raised one arm, and as he let it go it fell heavily on the ground; he stooped down, and, placing his lips near the mouth, endeavoured to ascertain if he breathed, and then, jumping to his feet, he seized my arm, and, in a tone I shall never forget, he said, “It’s over now.”

I tottered back as he spoke; the horrible thought of murder—the frightful sense of crime—the heaviest, the blackest that can stain the heart of man—stunned me; my senses reeled, and as I looked on that corpse stretched at my feet, I would have suffered my every bone to be

broken on the rack, to see one quiver of life animate its rigid members. Meanwhile, Darby was kneeling down, and seemed to search for something beside the body.

"All right—come now," said he; "we must be far from this before daybreak; and it's lucky if we've the means to do it." I moved onward like one walking in a dream, when horrible images surround him, and dreadful thoughts are ever crowding fast; but where, amid all, some glimmering sense of hope sustains him, and he half feels that the terrors will pass away, and his soul be calm and tranquil once more. What is it? What has happened? was the ever-rising question, as I heard Darby groping his way along the dark gallery and the darker stairs.

"Be steady, now," said he, in a whisper, "we're at the gate."

"Who comes there?" cried the sentry.

"A friend," said Darby, in a feigned voice, answering for me, while he dropped behind me. The heavy bolts were withdrawn, and I felt the cold air of the streets on my cheek.

"Where to, now?" said I with a dreamy consciousness that some place of safety must be sought, without well knowing why or wherefore.

"Lean on me, and don't speak," said Darby. "If you can walk as far as the end of the quay we're all safe." I walked on without further questioning, and almost without thought; and though, from time to time, Darby spoke to several persons as we passed, I heard not what they said, nor took any notice of them.



CHAPTER XX.

THE FLIGHT.

“ARE ye getting weak?” said Darby, as I staggered heavily against him and gasped twice or thrice for breath. “Are ye bleeding still?” was his next question, while he passed his hand gently within the sash, and felt my wound. I endeavoured to mutter something in reply, to which he paid no attention, but, stooping down, he threw me across his shoulder, and darting off at a more rapid pace than before, he left the more frequented thoroughfare, and entered a narrow and gloomy alley, unlighted by a single lamp. As he hurried onward he stopped more than once, as if in quest of some particular spot, but which in the darkness he was unable to detect. “Oh! Holy Mother!” he muttered, “the blood is soaking through me! Master Tom, dear—Master Tom, my darlin’, speak to me—speak to me, acushla!” But though I heard each word distinctly I could not utter one—a dreamy stupor was over me, and I only wished to be left quiet. “This must be it—ay, here it is,” said Darby, as he laid me gently down on the stone sill of the door, and knocked loudly with his knuckles. The summons, though repeated three or four times, was unheeded; and, although he knocked loudly enough to have alarmed the neighbourhood, and called out at the top of his voice, no one came; and the only sounds we could hear were the distant cadences of a drinking song, mingled with wild shouts of laughter, and still wilder cries of agony and woe.

“Here they are, at last,” said Darby, as he almost staved in the door with a heavy stone.

“Who’s there?” cried a harsh and feeble voice from within.

“’Tis me, Molly—’tis Darby M’Keown. Open quick, for the love of Heaven—here’s a young gentleman bleedin’ to death on the steps.”

"Ugh! there's as good as ever he was, and going as fast, too, here within," said the crone. "Ye must take him away—he wouldn't mind him now for a king's ransom."

"I'll break open the door this minit," said Darby, with a horrible oath, "av ye don't open it."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the hag. "If ye wor Darby M'Keown, ye'd know well how easy that is; try it—try it, acushla! oak timber and nails is able to bear all you'll do!"

"See, now," said Darby, dropping his voice to a whisper—"see, Molly, here's five goold guineas for ye, av ye'll let us in—'tis a man's life's on it, and one I'd give my own for twice over."

"Av ye offered me forty," replied she, "I darn't do it. Ye don't know the sorrow that's here this night. 'Tis Dan Fortescue is going. I'm coming, I'm coming," muttered she to some call from within. And then, without waiting to hear more, she shuffled back along the passage, and left us once more alone.

"There's nothing for it but this now," said Darby, as, retiring a few paces, he dashed his shoulder against the door with all his force; but, though a powerful man, and though every window rattled and trembled with the tremendous shock, the strong panels withstood the stroke, and never yielded in the least. "'Tis no use firing through the lock," said he, in a tone of despair. "Blessed Joseph! what's to be done?"

As he spoke, the light tread of a barefooted child was heard coming up the lane, and the same moment a little girl approached the door; she carried a cup in her hand, and held it carefully, as if fearful of spilling its contents. As she neared the door, she seemed uncertain how to proceed, and at last, as if gaining courage, tapped twice at it with her knuckles.

"Don't ye know me, Nora?" said Darby; "don't ye know Darby the Blast?"

"Ah! Mister M'Keown, is this you? Ah! I'm afeard it's little use there is in coming here to-night. Mr. Fortescue's dying within, and Doctor Kenagh can't leave him. I'm bringing him this to take, but——"

"Nora, dear," said Darby, "I've a secret for Mr. Fortescue, and must see him before he dies. Here's a crown,

my darlin', and don't tell any one I gave it to ye." Here he stooped down, and whispered rapidly some words in her ear.

"Who's there?" broke in the hag's voice from within.

"'Tis me—Nora," said the child, boldly.

"Are ye alone, there—do ye see any one about the door?"

"Sorra one; can't you let me in out of the cowl'd?"

"Come in quick, then," said the crone, as she opened the door carefully, and only wide enough to let the child pass; but the same instant Darby dashed forward his foot, and, flinging the door full wide, seized me by the collar, and dragged me in after him, closing the door at once behind him. The screams of the hag, though loud and vehement, were as unheeded as were Darby's own efforts to attract notice half an hour before.

"Be quiet, I say—hush yer crying, or, be the sowl o' the man that's dyin', I'll dhrive a ball through ye." The sight of a pistol-barrel seemed at last to have its effect, and she contented herself with a low, wailing kind of noise, as she tottered after us along the passage.

The cold air of the street, and the rest combined, had given me strength, and I was able to follow Darby, as he led the way through many a passage, and up more than one stair.

"Here it is," said the child, in a whisper, as she stopped at the door of a room which lay half ajar.

We halted in silence, and listened to the breathings of a man, whose short, sobbing respiration, broken by hiccup, denoted the near approach of death.

"Go on," cried a deep, low voice, in a tone of eagerness; "ye'll not have the cough now for some time."

The sick man made no reply, but his hurried breathing seemed to show that he was making some unwonted effort; at last he spoke, but in a voice so faint and husky, we could not hear the words. The other, however, appeared to listen, and, by a stray monosyllable, dropped at intervals, to follow the tenour of his speech. At last the sound ceased, and all was still.

"Go in now," said Darby, in a whisper, to the child, "I'll follow you."

The little girl gently pushed the door and entered, fol-

lowed by M'Keown, who, however, only advanced one foot within the room, as if doubting what reception he should meet with.

By the uncertain light of a wood-fire, which threw in fitful flashes its glare around, I perceived that a sick man lay on a mean-looking, miserable bed in one corner of a dark room; beside him, seated on a low stool, sat another, his head bent down to catch the low breathings which the dying man gave forth from time to time. The heavy snoring sound of others asleep directed my eyes to a distant part of the chamber, where I saw three fellows lying on the floor, partly covered by a blanket. I had barely time to see this much, when the figure beside the bed sprang forward, and, in a low but menacing tone, addressed M'Keown. The last words only could I catch, as he said, —

“And if he wakes up he may know you still.”

“And if he does,” said Darby, doggedly, “who cares? Isn't there as good blood as his shed for the cause? Look here!”

He dragged me forward as he spoke, and, tearing open my coat, pointed to the sash that was now saturated with the blood that flowed at every stir from my wound. The other looked fixedly at me for a second or two, took my hand within his, and, letting it fall heavily, he whispered a word to M'Keown, and turned away.

“No, no,” cried Darby, violently; “by the holy mass! ye'll not trate me that way. Sit down, Master Tom,” said he, as he forced me into an old arm-chair beside the fire. “Here, take a drink of water. Come here, doctor; come here, now, stop the bleeding; stand by me this wonst, and by this——” Here he crossed his fingers before him, and looked fervently upwards; but at this instant the sick man sprang up in his bed, and looked wildly about him.

“Isn't that Darby—isn't that M'Keown there?” cried he, as he pointed with his finger. “Darby,” he continued, in a low clear whisper—“Darby, see here, my boy; you often said I'd do nothing for the cause. Is this nothing?” He threw back the bedclothes as he spoke, and disclosed a ghastly wound that divided his chest, exposing the cartilage of the ribs, which stood out amid the welling blood

that oozed forth with every respiration he made. "Is it nothing that I gave up rank, and place, and fortune, the broad acres that were in my family for three centuries—all my hopes, all my prospects——"

"And if you did," interrupted M'Keown, hastily, "you knew what for."

"I knew what for!" repeated the sick man, as a deadly smile played upon his livid face and curled his white lip; "I know it now, at least: to leave my inheritance to a bastard—to brand my name with disgrace and dishonour—to go down to the grave a traitor, and, worse still——" He shuddered violently here, and though his mouth moved, no sound came forth; he sank back, worn out and exhausted.

"Was he *there*," said Darby to the doctor, with a significant emphasis on the word—"was he *there* to-night?"

"He was," replied the other. "He thinks, too, he fired the shot that did it; but, poor fellow! he was down before that. The boys brought him off. That child is going fast," continued he, as his eye fell upon me.

"Look to him, then, and don't be losin' time," said Darby, fiercely; "look to him," he added, more mildly, "and the Heavens will bless ye. Here's twenty goodden guineas—it's all I've saved these eight years—here they're for you, and save his life."

The old man knelt down beside me, and slipping a scissors within the scarf that lay fastened to my side with clotted blood, he proceeded to open and expose the situation of my wound. A cold, sick feeling, a kind of half-fainting sensation, followed this, and I could hear nothing of the dialogue that passed so near me. An occasional sting of pain shot through me as the dressing proceeded; but, save this, I had little consciousness of anything. At length, like one awakening from a heavy slumber, with faculties half-clouded by the dreamy past, I looked around me. All was still and motionless in the room. The doctor sat beside the sick man's bed, and Darby, his eyes riveted on me, knelt close to my chair, and held his hand upon the bandage over my wound. A gentle tap here came to the door, and the child I had seen before entered noiselessly, and, approaching the doctor, said,—

"The car is come, sir."

The old man nodded in silence, and then, turning towards Darby, he whispered something in his ear. M'Keown sprang to his legs at once, his cheek flushed deeply, and his eyes sparkled with animation.

"I have it! I have it!" cried he; "there never was such luck for us before."

With that he drew the old man to one side, and speaking to him in a low but rapid tone, evinced by the violence of his gestures and the tremulous eagerness of his voice how deeply he was interested.

"True enough, true enough," said the old man, after a pause; "poor Dan has but one more journey before him."

"Is he able to bear it, doctor?" said Darby, pointing towards me with his finger; that's all I ask. Has he the strength in him?"

"He'll do now," replied the other, gruffly; "there's little harm done him this time. Let him taste that, whenever you find him growing weak; and keep his head low, and there's no fear of him." As he spoke, he took from a cupboard in the wall a small phial, which he handed to M'Keown, who received the precious elixir with as much reverence as though it contained the very well-spring of human existence.

"And now," said Darby, "the less time lost now the better. It will soon be daylight on us. Master Tom, can you rise, acushla? Are you able to stand up?"

I made the effort as well as I could, but my limbs seemed chained down, and even my arm felt like lead beside me.

"Take him on your back," said the old man, hurriedly. "You'll stay here till sunrise. Take him downstairs on your back; and, when you have him in the open air, turn him towards the wind, and keep his head low, mind that."

I made another attempt to stand up; but, before I could effect it, Darby's strong arms were round my waist, and I felt myself lifted on his shoulder, and borne from the room. A muttered good-bye passed between the others, and Darby began to descend the stairs cautiously, while the little child went before with a candle. As the street-door was opened I could perceive that a car and horse stood in waiting, accompanied by two men, who, the moment they

saw me, sprang forward to Darby's assistance, and helped to place me on the car. M'Keown was soon beside me, and, supporting my head upon his shoulder, he contrived to hold me in a leaning position, giving me, at the same time, the full benefit of the cool breeze, which already refreshed and restored me. The vehicle now moved on in darkness and in silence. At first our pace was slow, but it gradually quickened as we passed along the quay—for as such I recognized it by the dull sound of the river near us. The bright lamps of the greater thoroughfares soon made their appearance; and, as we traversed these, I could mark that our pace slackened to a walk, and that we kept the very middle of the wide street, as if to avoid observation. Gradually we emerged from this, and, as I heard by the roll of the wheels, reached the outskirts of the town. We had not been many minutes there when the horse was put to his speed, and the car whirled along at a tremendous rate. Excepting a sense of weight and stiffness in the side, I had no painful feeling from my wound; while the rapidity with which we passed through the air imparted a sensation of drowsiness far from unpleasant. In this state I scarcely was conscious of what passed about me. Now and then some occasional halt, some chance interruption, would momentarily arouse me, and I could faintly hear the sound of voices; but of what they spoke I knew nothing. Darby frequently questioned me, but my utmost effort at reply was to press his hand. By times it would seem to me as though all I felt were but the fancies of some sick dream, which the morning should dispel and scatter. Then I thought that we were flying from an enemy, who pressed hotly on us, and gained at every stride; a vague, shadowy sense of some horrible event mingling with all, and weighing heavily on my heart.

As the time wore on my senses became clearer, and I saw that we were travelling along the seaside. The faint grey light of breaking day shed a cold gleam across the green water, which plashed with a mournful cadence on the low, flat shore. I watched the waves as they beat with a heavy sigh amid the scattered weeds, where the wild cry of the curlew mingled with the sound as he skimmed along the gloomy water, and my heart grew heavier. There is something—I know not what—terribly in unison with our

saddest thoughts in the dull plash of the sea at night: the loudest thunders of the storm, when white-crested waves rise high, and break in ten thousand eddies on the dark rocks, are not so suggestive of melancholy as the sighing moan of the midnight tide. Long-buried griefs, long-forgotten sorrows, rise up as we listen; and we feel as though that wailing cry were the funeral chant over cherished hopes and treasured aspirations. From my dark musings I was roused suddenly by Darby's voice asking of the men who sat at the opposite side, how the wind was?

"Westing by south," replied one, "as fair as need be, if there was enough of it—but who knows, we may have a capful yet, when the sun gets up."

"We'll not have long to wait for that," cried the other—"see there."

I lifted my eyes as he spoke, and beheld the pink stain of coming day rising above the top of a large mountain.

"That's Howth," said Darby, seizing with eagerness the proof of my returning senses.

"Come, press on, as fast as you can," said one of the men; "we must catch the ebb, or we'll never do it."

"Where does she lie?" said Darby, in a low whisper.

"Under the cliffs, in Bolskaton Bay," said the last speaker, whom I now perceived, by his dress and language, to be a sailor.

My curiosity was now excited to the utmost to know whither we were bound, and with an effort I articulated the one word, "Where?" Darby's eyes brightened as I spoke, he pressed my hand firmly within his, but made no reply. Attributing his silence to caution, I pressed him no further; and, indeed, already my former indifference came back on me, and I felt listless as before.

"Turn off there to the right," cried the sailor to the driver; and suddenly we left the high road, and entered a narrow byway, which seemed to lead along the side of the mountain close to the water's edge. Before we had proceeded far in this direction, a long, low whistle was heard from a distance.

"Stop there, stop," said the sailor, as he knelt upon the car, and replied to the signal. "Ay, all right, there they are," said he, as, pointing to a little creek between the rocks

below us, we saw a small row-boat with six men lying on their oars.

“Can’t he walk?” said the sailor, in a half whisper, as he stood beside the car. “Well, let’s lose no more time, we’ll take him down between us.”

“No, no,” said Darby; “put him on my back, I’ll do it myself.”

“The ground’s slipper than you take it,” said the other; “my way’s the safest.”

With that, he lifted me from the car, and placing me between Darby and himself, they grasped each other’s hands beneath me, and soon began a descent which I saw would have been perfectly impracticable for one man to have accomplished with another on his back.

During the time my desire to know where they were bringing me again grew stronger than ever; and, as I turned to ask Darby, I perceived that the tears were coursing each other fast down his weather-beaten cheeks, while his lips shook and trembled like one in an ague.

“Mind your footing there, my man, I say,” cried the sailor, “or you’ll have us over the cliff.”

“Round the rock to the left there,” cried a voice from below; “that’s it, that’s it—now you’re all right; steady there; give me your hand.”

As he spoke, two men advanced from the boat, and assisted us down the sloping beach, where the wet seaweed made every step a matter of difficulty.

“Lay him in the stern there—gently, lads, gently,” said the voice of one who appeared the chief amongst them; “that’s it; throw those jackets under his head. I say, piper, ar’n’t you coming with us?”

But Darby could not speak one word. A livid pallor was over his features, and the tears fell, drop by drop, upon his cheek.

“Master Tom,” said he, at length, as his lips almost touched me—“my child, my heart’s blood, you won’t forget poor Darby. Ye’ll be a great man yet—ye’ll be all I wish ye. But will you remember a poor man like me?”

“Jump ashore there, my good fellow,” cried the coxswain; “we’ll have enough to do to round the point before the tide ebbs.”

“One minit more—and God love ye for it,” said Darby,

in a voice of imploring accent; "who knows will we ever meet again. 'Tis the last time, maybe, I'll ever look on him."

I could but press his hand to my heart; for my agitation increased the debility I felt, and every effort to speak was in vain.

"One half minit more—if it's only that he'll be able to say, 'God bless you, Darby!' and I'll be happy."

"Push off, my lads," shouted the sailor, sternly; and as he spoke the oars plashed heavily in the sea, and the boat rocked over with the impulse. Twice the strong stroke of the oars sent the craft through the clear water, when the piper clasped his arm wildly around me, and kissing me on the cheek, he sprang over the side. The waves were nearly to his shoulders; but in a few seconds he had buffeted through them, and stood upon the shore. With a last effort I waved my hand in adieu; and as I sank back exhausted, I heard a wild cry burst from him, half in triumph, half in despair. One glance more I caught of his figure as we stood out to sea; he was kneeling on the beach, bareheaded, and as if in prayer. The tears gushed from my eyes as I beheld him, and the long pent-up sorrow at last broke forth, and I sobbed like a child.

"Come, come, my lad, don't feel downhearted," said the sailor, laying his hand on my shoulder. "The world can scarce have been over rough to one so young as you are. Lift up your head and see what a glorious morning we've got; and there comes the breeze over the water. We hadn't such weather the last time we made this trip, I assure you."

I looked up suddenly, and truly never did such a scene of loveliness meet my eyes. The sun had risen in all his glorious brilliancy, and poured a flood of golden light across the bay, tipping with a violet hue the far-off peaks of the Wicklow mountains, and lighting up the wooded valleys at their feet. Close above us rose the rugged sides of Howth in dark shadow, the frowning rocks and gloomy caverns contrasting with the glittering tints of the opposite coast, where every cottage and cliff sparkled in the dancing sunlight. As we rounded the point, a cheer broke from the men, and was answered at once. I turned my head, and saw beneath the tall cliffs the taper spars of

a small vessel, from which the sails hung listlessly, half brailed to the mast.

"There she lies," said the skipper; "that's the *Saucy Sal*, my master; and if you're any judge of a craft, I think you'll like her. Give way, lads—give way; when that rock yonder's covered, the tide is at the flood."

The boat sprang to the strong jerk of their brawny arms, and in a few minutes glided into the little creek where the *Saucy Sal* lay at anchor.

Lifting me up, they placed me on board the little vessel, while, without losing a moment, they proceeded to ship the anchor and shake out the canvas. In less than five minutes the white sails bent to the breeze, the water rustled at the prow, and we stood out to sea.

"Where to?" said I, in a faint whisper, to the sailor who held the tiller beside me.

"Down Channel, sir."

"And then?" asked I once more—"and then?"

"That must depend on the revenue cruisers, I believe," said he, more gruffly, and evidently indisposed to further questioning.

Alas! I had too little interest in life to care for where, and, laying my head upon my arm, fell into a heavy stupor for several hours.

The hot sun, the breeze, the unaccustomed motion, and, worse than all, the copious libations of brandy-and-water I was forced from time to time to take, gradually brought on fever, and, before evening, a burning thirst and throbbing headache seized me, and my senses, that hitherto had been but lethargic, became painfully acute, and my reason began to wander. In this state I remained for days, totally unconscious of the flight of time; frightful images of the past pursuing each other through my heated brain, and torturing me with horrors unspeakable. It was in one of my violent paroxysms I tore the bandage from my side, and, reopening my half-healed wound, became in a moment deluged with blood. I have no memory of aught that followed; the debility of almost death itself succeeded, and I lay without sense or motion. To this circumstance I owed my life, for, when I next rallied, the fever had left me, my senses were unclouded, my cheek no longer burned, nor did my temples throb,

and, as the sea-breeze played across my face, I drank it in with ecstasy, and felt once more the glorious sensations of returning health. It was evening, the faint wind that follows sunset scarce filled the sails as we glided along through the waveless sea. I had been listening to the low monotonous song of one of the sailors as he sat mending a sail beside me, when suddenly I heard a voice hail us from the water; the skipper jumped on the half-deck, and immediately replied—the words I could not hear, but, by the stir and movement about me, I saw something unusual had occurred, and, by an effort, I raised my head above the bulwark and looked about me. A long, low craft lay close alongside us, filled with men, whose blue caps and striped shirts struck me as strange and uncommon, not less than their black belts and cutlasses with which every man was armed. After an interchange of friendly greetings with our crew, for such they seemed, although I could not catch the words, she moved rapidly past us.

"There's their flotilla, sir," said the helmsman, as he watched my eye while it wandered over the water.

I crept up higher, and followed the direction of his finger. Never shall I forget that moment; before me, scarce, as it seemed, a mile distant, lay a thousand boats at anchor, beneath the shadow of tall sand-hills, decorated with gay and gaudy pennons, crowded with figures whose bright colours and glittering arms shone gorgeously in the setting sunlight. The bright waves reflected the myriad tints, while they seemed to plash in unison with the rich swell of martial music that stole along the water with every freshening breeze. The shore was covered with tents, some of them surmounted with large banners that floated out gaily to the breeze; and, far as the eye could reach, were hosts of armed men dotted over the wide plain beside the sea. Vast columns of infantry were there—cavalry and artillery, too—their bright arms glittering, and their gay plumes waving, but all still and motionless, as if spell-bound. As I looked, I could see horsemen gallop from the dense squares, and riding hurriedly to and fro. Suddenly a blue rocket shot into the calm sky, and broke in a million glittering fragments over the camp; the deep roar of a cannon boomed out, and then the music of a thousand bands swelled high and full, and in an instant

the whole plain was in motion, and the turf trembled beneath the tramp of marching men. Regiment followed regiment, squadron poured after squadron, as they descended the paths towards the beach, while a long, dark line wound through the glittering mass, and marked the train of the artillery, as with caissons and ammunition-waggons they moved silently over the grassy surface.

All that I had ever conceived of warlike preparation was as nothing to the gorgeous spectacle before me. The stillness of the evening air, made tremulous with the clang of trumpets and the hoarse roar of drums—the mirror-like sea, coloured with the reflection of bright banners and waving pennants—and then, the simultaneous step of the mighty army, so filled up every sense, that I feared lest all might prove the mere pageant of a dream, and vanish as it came.

“What a glorious sight!” cried I, at length, half wild with enthusiasm. “Where are we?”

“Where are we!” repeated the skipper, smiling. “Look out, and you’ll soon guess that. Are those very like the uniforms of King George? When did you see steel breastplates and helmets before? This is France, my lad.”

“France! France!” said I, stupefied with the mere thought.

“Yes, to be sure. That’s the Army of England, as they call it, you see yonder; they are practising the embarkation. See the red rockets! there they go—three, four, five, six—that’s the signal; in less than half an hour thirty thousand men will be ready to embark. Mark how they press on faster and faster; and watch the cavalry, as they dismount and lead their horses down the steep. See how the boats pull in shore—but, holloa there! we shall get foul of the gun-boats—already we’ve run in too close. Down helm, my lad; keep the headland yonder on your lee.”

As he spoke, the light craft bent over to the breeze, and skipped freely over the blue water. Each moment wafted us farther away from the bright scene, and soon a projecting point shut out the whole, save the swell of the brass bands as it floated on the breeze, and I might have believed it a mere delusion.

“They practise that manœuvre often enough to know it well,” said the skipper; “sometimes at daybreak—now,

at noonday—and again, as we see, at sunset; and no one knows at what moment the attack that seems a feint may not turn out to be real. But here we are now alongside; our voyage is ended."

The anchor plashed from our bow, while a signal was made from the shore, and answered by us; and in an instant we were surrounded with boats.

"Ha, Antoine!" cried a sous-officier in a naval uniform, who sat on the gunwale of a long eight-oar gig, and touched his hat in recognition of our skipper. "What news '*outré mer*'?—what are we doing in Ireland?"

"My young friend here must tell you that," replied the skipper, laughingly, as he laid his hand on my shoulder. "Let me present him to you—Mr. Burke, Lieutenant Brevix."

The lieutenant saluted me politely, and then, springing up, he jumped gaily on board of us, and shook our hands with great appearance of cordiality.

"They'll want to see you ashore, Antoine, as soon as may be; there are despatches going off to-night for Paris, and they'll be glad to send the last accounts of the state of the Channel."

"Light winds and no cruisers are all I have to tell them, then," said the skipper.

The lieutenant now took him aside, and they conversed for some time in a low tone, during which I occupied myself by watching the sentinels who paraded incessantly to and fro along a low wooden pier that stretched out into the sea, and formed, with a promontory at some distance, a small harbour. Their watch seemed of the most vigilant, if I might judge from the low but continued cry which passed from mouth to mouth of "*Sentinelle, prenez garde à vous*;" while from each boat, across the harbour, a sing-song note chanted in response the monotonous sounds, "*bon quart!*" as each quarter of an hour stole past. These precautions against the approach of any strange craft extended, as I afterwards learned, along the entire coast from Dieppe to Ostend; yet were they not sufficient to prevent frequent visits from the English spies, who penetrated into every quarter of the camp, and even had the hardihood to visit the theatre of the

town, and express loudly their disapprobation of the performance.

"You'd better come ashore with me, sir," said the lieutenant. "Colonel Dorsenne will be glad to ask you some questions. What papers have you got?"

"None, save a few private letters," said I, somewhat confused at the question.

"No matter," said he, gaily. "I hear from Antoine you wish to join the service here. That wish is your best recommendation to the colonel; he'll not trouble you for reasons, I warrant you. Conduct Monsieur to the quartier-général," said the lieutenant to a corporal, who, with his party of four men, stood awaiting at the landing-place the arrival of any one from the boats; and in an instant, the men falling to each side of me, took their way along the pier. I could mark as we went that more than once their looks were bent on me with an expression of compassion and pity, which at the time I was at a loss to explain. I knew not then that the road we were taking was that which so often led to death, and that it was only on the very day before two Englishmen were shot for having ventured on shore without authority.

The *consigne* of the corporal passed us through one post after another, until we reached the open plain, over which now the night was falling fast. A lantern at some distance off marked the quarters of the officer on duty; and thither we directed our steps, and at last reached a small wooden hut, from within which the sounds of mirth and revelry proceeded. The voice of the sentinel who challenged us brought an officer to the door, who, the moment his eyes fell on me, stepped back, and, passing his hand hurriedly across his forehead, muttered, half inaudibly, "Another already!"

While he retired into an inner apartment, I had time to look at the singular decorations which adorned the walls of the antechamber; around on every side, and arranged like trophies, were grouped the weapons of different arms of the service, surmounted with some device emblematic of their peculiar character, or sometimes the mere record of some famous battle in which they had pre-eminently distinguished themselves. Here were the long, straight swords of the cuirassier crossed above the steel

breastplate, and surmounted by the heavy helmet half hid in leopard skin, and bearing the almost effaced word "Arcole" in front; there was the short carbine of the voltigeur, over which hung the red cap and its gay gold tassel, with the embroidered motto, "*En avant*," in gold letters; the long and graceful weapon of the lancer, the curved sabre of the *chasseur à cheval*, even the axe of the pioneer was not wanting, displaying at a glance some trait of every branch of the mighty force that bore the proud designation of "*La Grande Armée*."

I was busily engaged inspecting these when the door opened, and an officer in full uniform appeared; his figure was above the middle size, strongly and squarely built, and his bronzed features, and high, bold forehead gave him a soldier-like air.

"Your name, sir," said he, quickly, as he drew himself up before me, and looked sternly in my face.

"Burke—Thomas Burke."

"Write it down, Auguste," said he, turning to a young officer who stood, pen in hand, behind him.

"Your rank or profession?"

"*Gentilhomme*," said I, not knowing that the word expressed nobility.

"*Ah, pardieu*," cried he, as he showed his white teeth in a grin. "Produce your papers, if you have any."

"I have nothing save those letters," said I, handing him those of De Meudon.

Scarce had his eye glanced over them, when I saw his colour heighten and his cheek tremble.

"What!" cried he, "are you the same young Irishman who is mentioned here, the constant companion and friend of poor Charles? He was my schoolfellow; we were at Brienne together. What a mistake I was about to fall into! How did you come, and when?"

Before I could reply to any of his many questions, the naval officer I had met at the harbour entered, and delivered his report.

"Yes, yes; I know it all," said Dorsenne, hurriedly throwing his eye over it. "It's all right, perfectly right, Brevix. Let Capitaine Antoine be examined at the quartier-général. I'll take care of Monsieur here; and, to begin—come and join us at supper."

Passing his arm familiarly over my shoulder, he led me into the adjoining room, where two other officers were seated at a table covered with silver dishes and numerous flasks of wine. A few words sufficed for my introduction, and a few glasses of champagne placed me as thoroughly at my ease as though I had passed my life amongst them, and never heard any other conversation than the last movement of the French army, and their projects for future campaigns.

"And so," said the colonel, after hearing from me a short account of the events which had induced me to turn my eyes to France—"and so you'd be a soldier? *Eh bien*, I see nothing better going myself. There's Davernac will tell you the same, though he has lost his arm in the service."

"*Oui, pardieu*," said the officer on my right, "I am not the man to dissuade him from a career I've ever loved."

"*À vous, mon ami*," said the young officer who first addressed me on my arrival, as he held out his glass and clinked it against mine. "I hope we shall have you one of these days as our guide through the dark streets of London. The time may not be so distant as you think. Never shake your head at it."

"It is not that I would mean," said I, eagerly.

"What then?" said the colonel. "You don't suppose such an expedition as ours could fail of success?"

"Nor that either," replied I. "I am not so presumptuous as to form an opinion on the subject."

"*Diantre*, then, what is it?"

"Simply this: that whatever fortune awaits me, I shall never be found fighting against the country under whose rule I was born. England may not—alas! she has not been—just to us. But whatever resistance I might have offered in the ranks of my countrymen, I shall never descend to in an invading army. No, no; if France have no other war than with England—if she have not the cause of continental liberty at heart—she'll have no blood of mine shed in her service."

"*Sacristi!*" said the colonel, sipping his wine coolly, "you had better keep these same opinions of yours to yourself. There's a certain little general we have at Paris, who rarely permits people to reason about the cause of the

campaign. However, it is growing late now, and we'll not discuss the matter at present. Auguste, will you take Burke to your quarters? and to-morrow I'll call on the general about his brevet for the Polytechnique."

I felt now that I had spoken more warmly than was pleasing to the party; but the sentiments I had announced were only such as in my heart I had resolved to abide by, and I was pleased that an opportunity so soon offered to display them. I was glad to find myself at rest at last; and although events pressed on me fast and thick enough to have occupied my mind, no sooner had I laid my head on my pillow than I fell into a sound sleep.



CHAPTER XXI.

THE "ÉCOLE MILITAIRE."

LET me now skip over at a bound some twelve months of my life—not that they were to me without their chances and their changes, but they were such as are incidental to all boyhood—and present myself to my reader as the scholar at the "Polytechnique." What a change had the time, short as it was, worked in all my opinions; how completely had I unlearned all the teaching of my early instructor, poor Darby; how had I been taught to think that glory was the real element of war, and that its cause was of far less moment than its conduct!

The enthusiasm which animated every corps of the French army, and was felt through every fibre of the nation, had full sway in the little world of the military school. There, every battle was known and conned over; we called every spot of our playground by some name great in the history of glory; and among ourselves we assumed the titles of the heroes who shed such lustre on

their country; and thus in all our boyish sports our talk was of the Bridge of Lodi—Arcole—Rivoli—Castiglione—the Pyramids—Mount Tabor. While the names of Kléber, Kellerman, Masséna, Desaix, Murat, were adopted amongst us, but one name only remained unappropriated, and no one was bold enough to assume the title of him whose victories were the boast of every tongue. If this enthusiasm was general amongst us, I felt it in all its fullest force, for it came untinged with any other thought. To *me* there was neither home nor family—my days passed over in one unbroken calm; no thought of pleasure, no hope of happiness when the fête day came round; my every sense was wrapped up in the one great desire—to be a soldier—to have my name known among those great men whose fame was over Europe—to be remembered by him whose slightest word of praise was honour itself. When should that day come for me? when should I see the career open before me?—these were my earliest waking thoughts, my last at nightfall.

If the intensity of purpose, the strong current of all my hopes, formed for me an ideal and a happy world within me, yet did it lend a trait of seriousness to my manner that seemed like melancholy; and while few knew less what it was to grieve, a certain sadness in me struck my companions, on which they often rallied me, but which I strove in vain to conquer. It was true that at certain times my loneliness and isolation came coldly on my heart; when one by one I saw others claimed by their friends, and hurrying away to some happy home, where some fond sister threw her arm around a brother's neck, or some doting mother clasped her son close to her bosom, and kissed his brow, a tear would find its way down my cheek, and I would hasten to my room, and, locking the door, sit down alone to think, till my sad heart grew weary, or my sterner nature rose within me, and, by an effort over myself, I turned to my studies and forgot all else. Meanwhile I made rapid progress; the unbroken tenor of my thoughts gave me a decided advantage over the others, and long before the regular period arrived the day for my final examination was appointed.

What a lasting impression do some passages of early life leave behind them! Even yet—and how many years

are past!—how well do I remember all the hopes and fears that stirred my heart as the day drew near; how each morning at sunrise I rose to pore over some of the books which formed the subjects of examination; how, when the grey dawn was only breaking, have I bent over the pages of Vauban, and the calculations of Carnot, and with what a sinking spirit have I often found that a night seemed to have erased all the fruit of a long day's labour, and that the gain of my hard-worked intellect had escaped me; and then again, like magic, the lost thought would come back, my brain grow clear, and all the indistinct and shadowy conceptions assume a firm and tangible reality, which I felt like power! At such times as these my spirits rose, my heart beat high, a joyous feeling throbbed in every pulse, and an exhilaration almost maddening elevated me, and there was nothing I would not have dared—no danger I would not have confronted. Such were the attractions of my boyish days, and such the temperament they bequeathed to my manhood.

It was on the 16th of June, the anniversary of Marengo, when the drum beat to arms in the court of the Polytechnique, and soon after the scholars were seen assembling in haste from various quarters, anxious to learn if their prayer had been acceded to, which asked permission for them to visit the "Invalides," the usual indulgence on the anniversary of any great victory.

As we flocked into the court we were struck by seeing an orderly dragoon standing beside the head-master, who was eagerly perusing a letter in his hands; when he had concluded he spoke a few words to the soldier, who at once wheeled round his horse and trotted rapidly from the spot.

Again the drum rolled out, and the order was given to form in line; in an instant the command was obeyed, and we stood in silent expectation of the news which we perceived awaited us.

"*Messieurs les élèves,*" he began, when stillness was restored, "this day being the anniversary of the glorious battle of Marengo, the General Bonaparte has decreed that a review should be held of the entire school. Lieutenant-General d'Auvergne will arrive here at noon to inspect you, and on such reports as I shall give of your

general conduct, zeal, and proficiency will recommendations be forwarded to the First Consul for your promotion."

A loud cheer followed this speech. The announcement far surpassed our most ardent hopes, and there was no limit to our enthusiasm; and loud *vivas* in honour of General Bonaparte, D'Auvergne, and the lead-master himself were heard on all sides.

Scarcely was the breakfast over when our preparations began. What a busy scene it was! Here, were some brushing up their uniforms, polishing their sword-hilts, and pipeclaying their cross-belts; there, might be seen others conning over the directions of field manœuvres, and refreshing their memory of the words of command; some, practised marching in groups along the corridor; others, too much excited by the prospect before them, jumped madly from place to place, shouting and singing snatches of soldier-songs; but all were occupied. As for me, it was only two days before I had obtained my grade of corporal; my new uniform had only just come home, and I put it on for the first time with no inconsiderable pride; indeed, I could scarce turn my eyes, as I walked, from the stripes upon my arm that denoted my rank. Long before the appointed time we were all assembled, and when the clock struck twelve and the drum beat out, not a boy was absent; we were drawn up in three columns according to our standing, spaces being left between each to permit of our wheeling into line at the word of command. The head-master passed down our ranks, narrowly inspecting our equipments and scrutinizing every detail of our costume; but a stronger impulse than ordinary was now at work, and not the slightest irregularity was anywhere detectable. Meanwhile the time passed on, and although every eye was directed to the long avenue of lime-trees by which the general must arrive, nothing moved along it; and the bright streaks of sunlight that peeped between the trees were unbroken by any passing shadow. Whispers passed along the ranks, some fearing he might have forgotten the whole appointment, others suspecting that another review elsewhere had engrossed his attention, and at last a half murmur of dissatisfaction crept through the mass, which only the presence of the *chef* restrained

within due bounds. One o'clock struck, and yet no rider appeared; the alley remained silent and deserted as before. The minutes now seemed like hours—weariness and lassitude appeared everywhere. The ranks were broken, and many wandered from their posts, and forgot all discipline. At last a cloud of dust was seen to rise at a distance, and gradually it approached the long avenue; and every eye was turned in the direction, and in an instant the stragglers resumed their places, and all was attention and anxiety, while every look pierced eagerly the dense cloud, to see whether it was not the long-wished-for staff which was coming. At length the object burst upon our sight; but what was our disappointment to see that it was only a travelling carriage with four post-horses that approached; no appearance of a soldier was there, not one solitary dragoon—a half-uttered shout announced our dissatisfaction, for we at once guessed it was merely some chance visitor, or perhaps the friends of some of the scholars, who had thus excited our false hopes.

The *chef* himself participated in our feeling, and passing down the lines he announced, that if the general did not arrive within ten minutes, he would himself dismiss us, and set us at liberty. A cheer of gratitude received this speech, and we stood patiently awaiting our liberation, when suddenly, from the guard-house at the gate, the clash of arms was heard, and the roll of drums in salute, and the same instant the carriage we had seen rolled into the courtyard, and took up its station in the middle of the square. The next moment the door was opened and the steps lowered, and an officer in a splendid uniform assisted three ladies to alight. Before we recovered from the surprise of the proceeding, the master had approached the party, and by his air of deference and deep respect denoted that they were no ordinary visitors; but our attention was quickly drawn from the group that now stood talking and laughing together, for already the clank of a cavalry escort was heard coming up the avenue, and we beheld the waving plumes and brilliant uniform of a general officer's staff advancing at a rapid trot. The drums now rolled out along the lines, we stood to arms—the gallant *cortège* turned into the court and formed in front of us. All eyes were fixed on the general himself,



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the perfect *beau idéal* of an old soldier. He sat his horse as firmly and gracefully as the youngest aide-de-camp of his suite; his long white hair, dressed in queue behind, was brushed back off his high broad forehead; his clear blue eye, mild yet resolute, glanced over our ranks, and as he bowed to the head-master, his whole gesture and bearing was worthy of the Court of which once he was a brilliant member.

"I have kept my young friends waiting for me," said he in a low but clear voice, "and it now remains for me to make the only *amende* in my power—a short inspection. Dorsenne, will you take the command?"

I started at the name, and looked round, and close beside him stood the same officer who had so kindly received me the day I landed in France; though he looked at me, however, I saw he did not remember me, and my spirits sank again as I thought how utterly friendless and alone I was.

The general was true to his word in making the inspection as brief as possible; he rode leisurely down the ranks, stopping from time to time to express his satisfaction, or drop some chance word of encouragement or advice, which we caught up with eagerness and delight. Forming us into line, he ordered his aide-de-camp to put us through some of the ordinary parade manœuvres, which we knew as thoroughly as the most disciplined troops. During all this time, the group of ladies maintained their position in front, and seemed to watch the review with every semblance of interest. The general, too, made one of the party, and appeared from time to time to explain the intended movement, and direct their attention to the scene.

"Let them march past in salute," said he, at length; "the poor fellows have had enough of it; I must not encroach on the entire holiday."

A unanimous cheer was the reply to this kind speech, and we formed in sections and marched by him at a quick-step. The *chef d'école* had now approached the staff, and was making his report on the boys, when the general again interrupted him by saying,—

"Madame has expressed a wish to see the boys at their usual exercise of the play hour. If the request be admissible——"

"Certainly, *mon Général*, of course," said he. And, stepping forward, he beckoned to one of the drummers to come near; he whispered a word, and the tattoo beat out, and, like magic, every one sprang from his ranks, caps were flung into the air, and *vivas* rung out from every quarter of the court.

The sudden transition from discipline to perfect liberty added to our excitement, and we became half wild with delight. The first mad burst of pleasure over, we turned, as if by instinct, to our accustomed occupations; here were seen a party collecting for a drill, officers gathering and arranging their men, and sergeants assisting in the muster; there, were others, armed with spades and shovels, at work on an entrenchment, while some were driving down stockades and fixing a palisade; another set, more peaceful in their pursuits, had retired to their little gardens, and were busy with watering-pots and trowels. The section I belonged to were the seniors of the school, and we had erected a kind of fort which it was our daily amusement to defend and attack, the leadership on either side being determined by lots. On this day the assault had fallen to my command, and I hurried hither and thither collecting my forces, and burning for the attack.

We were not long in assembling, and the garrison having announced their readiness by the display of a flag from the ramparts, the assault began. I know not why nor wherefore, but on this day my spirits were unusually high; it was one of those chance occasions when my temperament, heated and glowing, had elevated me in my own esteem, and I would have given my life for some opportunity of distinguishing myself.

I led my party on, then, with more than common daring, and though repulsed by the besieged, we fell back only for a moment, and returned to the assault determined to succeed; the others, animated by the same spirit, fought as bravely, and the cheers that rose from one side were replied to by shouts as full of defiance from the other. Heated and excited, I turned round to order an attack of my whole force, when, to my surprise, I beheld that the general and his staff, accompanied by the ladies, had taken their places a short distance off, and were become interested spectators of the siege. This

alone was wanting to stimulate my efforts to the utmost, and I now returned to the fight with tenfold impetuosity. But if this feeling animated me, it also nerved my antagonists, for their resistance rose with every moment, and as they drove us back from their walls, cheers of triumph rang out and proclaimed the victory.

Already the battle had lasted nearly an hour, and all that was obtained was a slight breach in one of the out-works, too small to be practicable for assault. In this state were matters when the sound of a cavalry escort turned every eye towards the entrance to the courtyard, where we now beheld a squadron of the *Lanciers rouges* following a numerous and brilliant staff of general officers. Scarcely had they entered the gates when a loud cry rent the air, and every voice shouted, "*C'est lui ! c'est lui !*" and the next moment, "*Vive Bonaparte ! vive le Premier Consul !*" All that I ever heard from poor De Meudon came rushing on my mind, and my heart swelled out till it seemed bursting my very bosom. The next instant my eye turned to the little fort; the moment was propitious, for there every cap was waving, every look bent towards *him*. I seized the opportunity, and pointing silently to the breach, stole forward; in a second I was beneath the grassy rampart, in another I reached the breach, the next brought me to the top, where, with a shout of victory, I called on my men to follow me. On they came rushing—but too late; already the garrison were upon me, and, overcome by numbers, I fought alone and unsupported; step by step they drove me to the edge of the rampart, already my foot was on the breach, when with a spring I dashed at the flag-staff and carried it with me as I fell headlong into the ditch. In a moment I was on my legs, but so stunned and crushed that I fell almost immediately again; cold perspiration broke over my face and forehead, and I should have fainted but that they dashed some water over me. As I lay sick and faint I lifted my eyes, and what was my amazement to see, not the little companions of the school about me, but the gorgeous uniform of staff officers, and two elegantly-dressed ladies, one of whom held a cup of water in her hand and sprinkled it over my brow. I looked down upon my torn dress, and the sleeve of my coat, where the marks of my rank were already half effaced,

and I felt the tears start into my eyes as the remembrance of my late failure crossed my mind ; at the instant the crowd opened, and a pale but handsome face, where command was tempered by a look of almost womanly softness, smiled upon me.

" *C'était bien fait, mon enfant,*" said he, "*trés bien fait,* and if you have lost a coat by the struggle, why I must even see if I can't give you another to replace it. Monsieur Legrange, what is the character of this boy in the school ? Is he diligent, zealous, and well-conducted ?"

" All of the three, general," said the *chef*, bowing obsequiously.

" Let him have his brevet ; to date from to-day. Who are his friends ? "

A whispered answer replied to this inquiry.

" Indeed !" said the first speaker ; " reason the more we should take care of him. Monsieur," continued he, turning towards me, " to-morrow you shall have your epaulettes ; never forget how you gained them, and remember ever that every grade in the service is within the reach of a brave man who does his duty." So saying he passed on, while, overcome by emotion, I could not speak or move.

" There, he is much better now," said a soft voice near me ; " you see his colour is coming back." I looked up, and there were two ladies standing beside me. The elder was tall and elegantly formed ; her figure, which in itself most graceful, looked to its full advantage by the splendour of her dress : there was an air of stateliness in her manner, which had seemed *hauteur* were it not for a look of most benevolent softness that played about her mouth whenever she spoke. The younger, who might in years have seemed her daughter, was in every respect unlike her : she was slight and delicately formed, her complexion and her black eyes, shaded by a long dark fringe, bespoke the Provençal, her features were beautifully regular, and when at rest completely Greek in their character ; but each moment some chance word, some passing thought, implanted a new expression, and the ever-varying look of her flashing eyes and full round lips played between a smile and that arch spirit that essentially belongs to the fair daughters of the South. It was not until my fixed

gaze had brought a deep blush to her cheek, that I felt how ardently I had been looking at her.

"Yes, yes," said she, hurriedly, "he's quite well now," and at the same moment she made a gesture of impatience to pass on. But the elder held her arm close within her own, as she whispered with something of half malice—"But stay, Marie, I should like to hear his name. Ah!" cried she, starting in affected surprise, "how flushed you are; there must be something in the air here, so we had better proceed." And with a soft smile and a courteous motion of her hand she passed on.

I looked after them as they went; a strange odd feeling stirred within my heart—a kind of wild joy with a mingled sense of hope too vague to catch at. I watched the drooping feather of her bonnet, and the folds of her dress as they fluttered in the wind, and when she disappeared from my sight, I could scarce believe that she was not still beside me, and that her dark eyes did not look into my very soul. But already my companions crowded about me, and amid a hundred warm congratulations and kind wishes I took my way back to the college.

Scarcely was breakfast over the following morning, when the order arrived for my removal from the scholar quarter of the Polytechnique to that occupied by the cadets. A small tri-coloured cockade affixed to my hat was the only emblem of my new rank; but, simple as it was, no decoration ever attracted more envy and admiration from the beholders, nor gave more pride to the wearer, than that knot of ribbon.

"At number thirteen you'll find your quarters, *Monsieur le Cadet*," said a sergeant, as he presented me with the official order. I remember at this very hour what a thrill his military salute sent through me. It was the first acknowledgment of my grade—the first recognition that I was no longer a mere schoolboy. I had not much time granted me to indulge such sensations, for already my school-fellows had thronged round me, and overwhelmed with me questions and felicitations.

"Ah! what a fortunate fellow—no examination to go through—has his grade given him, without toiling for it—is it the cavalry, Burke?—are you *à cheval*—when do you join?—where is your regiment?—shall we see you

again?—won't you write to us all about the corps when you join them?—who is your comrade?—yes, tell us that; who is he?"

"*Ma foi*," said I, "I know not more than yourselves. You are all aware to what an accident I owe my promotion. Where I am destined for, or in what corps, I can't tell; and as to my comrade——"

"Ah! take care he's no tyrant," said one.

"Yes, yes," cried another—"show him you know what a small sword is at once."

"Burke won't be trifled with," cried a third.

And then followed a very chorus of voices, each detailing some atrocity committed by the cadets on their newly-joined associates. One had a friend wounded in the side the very day he joined; another knew some one who was thrown out of a window: here was an account of a delicate boy who passed an entire night in the snow, and died of a chest disease three weeks after; there, a victim to intemperance met his fate in the orgie that celebrated his promotion. This picture, I confess, did somewhat damp the ardour of my first impressions; and I took leave of my old friends with not less feeling of affection, that I doubted how much kindness and good feeling I had to expect from my new ones. In this mood of mind I shook their hands for the last time, and followed the soldier who carried my baggage to the distant quarter of the *école*. As I entered the large court by the richly ornamented gate, whose bronzed tracery and handsome carving dated from the time of Louis XIV., my heart swelled with conscious pride. The façade of the square, unlike the simple front of the scholars' quarters, was beautifully architectural; massive consoles supported the windows, and large armorial insignia, cut on stone, surmounted the different entrances: but what most captivated my spirits and engaged my attention was a large flag in the centre, from which waved the broad ensign of France, beside which a sentinel paced to and fro. He presented arms as I passed; and the click of his musket, as he stood erect, sent a thrill through me, and made my very fingers tingle with delight.

"This is number thirteen, sir," said the soldier, as we arrived in front of one of the doorways; and before I could reply, the door opened, and a young officer, in the

uniform of an infantry regiment, appeared. He was about to pass out, when his eye resting on the luggage the soldier had just placed beside him, he stopped suddenly, and, touching his cap, asked, in a polite tone,—

"Not Mr. Burke, is it?"

"Yes," said I, bowing in return.

"*Eh, mon camarade,*" said he, holding out his hand, "delighted to see you. Have you breakfasted? Well, you'll find all ready for you in the quarters. I shall be back soon. I'm only going to a morning drill, which won't last half an hour; so make yourself at home, and we'll meet soon again."

So saying, he once more saluted me, and passed on. "Not very like what I feared," thought I, as I entered the quarters, whose look of neatness and comfort so pleasantly contrasted with my late abode. I had barely time to look over the prints and maps of military subjects which ornamented the walls, when my new friend made his appearance.

"No parade to-day, thank Heaven," said he, throwing down his cap and sabre, and lolling at full length on the little camp sofa. "Now, *mon cher camarade*, let us make acquaintance at once, for our time is likely to be of the shortest. My name is Tascher, an humble sous-lieutenant of the 21st Regiment of Foot. As much a stranger in this land as yourself, I fancy," continued he, after a slight pause, "but very well contented to be adopted by it."

After this opening, he proceeded to inform me that he was the nephew of Madame Bonaparte—her sister's only son—who, at his mother's death, left Guadaloupe, and came over to France, and became an *élève* of the Polytechnique. There he had remained five years, and, after a severe examination, obtained his brevet in an infantry corps; his uncle Bonaparte having shown him no other favour nor affection than a severe reprimand on one occasion for some boyish freak, when all the other delinquents escaped scot-free.

"I am now under orders for service," said he; "but where for, and when, I can't tell. But this I know, that whatever good fortune may be going a-begging, I, Lieutenant Tascher, am very likely to get only the hem of the garment."

There was a tone of easy and frank good-nature in all he said, which at once disposed me to like the young creole; and we spent the whole afternoon recounting our various adventures and fortunes, and before night came on were sworn friends for life.



CHAPTER XXII.

THE "TUILERIES" IN 1803.

THE life of the cadet differed little from that of the school-boy. The same routine of study, the same daily round of occupation and duty were his. Until drafted to the particular corps to which he might be appointed, he only could absent himself from the college by special leave; and the most rigid of all military discipline prevailed during the brief interval which was to fit him for the arduous life of a soldier. The evenings, however, were at our disposal; and what a pleasure it was—the fatigue of the day over—to wander forth into the city—that brilliant Paris—near which I had lived so long, and yet had seen so little of.

At first the splendour of the shops, the unceasing flow of population, the might and grandeur of the public buildings, attracted all my attention; and when these wore off in novelty, I could still wander with delight through the gay gardens of the Tuileries, and watch the sparkling fountains as they splashed in the pale moonlight, and look upon the happy children who played about them, their merry laughter ringing through the water's plash. What a fairy scene it was to watch the groups as they passed and re-passed—came and went, and disappeared—amid those dark alleys, where the silent footstep did not mar the

sounds of happy voices; and then, how have I turned from these, to throw a wistful glance towards the palace windows, where some half-closed curtain, from time to time, would show the golden sparkle of a brilliant lustre, or the rich frame of a mirror; mayhap an open sash would for a moment display some fair form, the outline only seen as she leaned on the balcony, and drank in the balmy air of the mild evening, while the soft swell of music would float from the gorgeous saloon, and falling on my ear, set me a-dreaming of pleasures my life had never known. My utter loneliness pressed deeper on me every day; for, while each of my companions had friends and relatives, among whom their evenings were passed, I was friendless and alone. The narrowness of my means—I had nothing save my pay—prevented my frequenting the theatre, or even accepting such invitations as the other cadets pressed upon me; and thus for hours long have I sat and watched the windows of the palace, weaving to myself stories of that ideal world from which my humble fortune debarred me.

It had been years since the Tuileries exhibited anything resembling the state that formerly prevailed in that splendid palace; but, at the period I speak of, Bonaparte had just been chosen Consul for life, and already the organization of his household had undergone a most considerable alteration. In the early years of the Consulate, a confused assemblage of aides-de-camp, whose heavy gait and loud speech betokened less the Court than the camp, were the only attendants on his person. He lived in the centre pavilion, as if in a tent in the midst of his army; but now he inhabited the splendid suite of rooms to the left of the pavilion, *de l'horloge*, as it is called, which stretch away towards the river. The whole service of the palace was remodelled; and, without wounding those prejudices that attached to the times of the deposed monarchy by adopting the titles of chamberlain, or gentlemen of the chamber, he gradually instituted the ceremonial of a Court by preferring to the posts about his person those whose air and manners savoured most of the higher habitudes of society, and whose families were distinguished among the *noblesse* of the kingdom.

Duroc, the chief aide-de-camp of the General, was ap-

pointed governor of the palace; and it was said that the Consul himself studied all the ancient ceremonial of the old Court, and ordained that every etiquette of royalty should be resumed with the most unerring accuracy. The chamberlains were represented by prefects of the palace, and Josephine had her ladies of honour, like any princess of the blood royal.

The Consul, still imitating the observances of the Bourbons, had his *petits levers* and his grand receptions; and if the new-created functionaries possessed little of the courteous ease and high-bred habitudes of the old Court, there was in their hard-won honours—most of them promoted on the very field of battle—that which better suited the prejudices of the period, and scarcely less became the gilded saloons of the Tuileries.

Like all newly-organized societies, the machinery worked ill at first. Few, if any of them, had ever seen a Court; and the proud but yet respectful obedience which characterized the French gentleman in the presence of his sovereign, was converted into an obsequious and vulgar deference towards Bonaparte, equally opposite to the true type, as it was foreign to the habits, of the blunt soldier who proffered it. But what, after all, signified these blemishes? There was beauty—never in the brighter annals of France had more lovely women filled those gorgeous saloons; there was genius—heroism—the highest chivalry of the great nation could scarce vie with the proud deeds of those grouped around him—the mighty one, on whom each eye was fixed; and if, as M. Talleyrand remarked, there were those who knew not how to walk on the waxed floor of a palace, few could tread more finely the field of battle, and step with firmer foot the path that led to glory. Yet with all the First Consul's pride in those whose elevation to rank and dignity was his own work, his predilections leaned daily more and more towards the high and polished circles of the Faubourg St. Germain. The courteous and easy politeness of Talleyrand, the chivalrous and courtly bearing of the Count de Narbonne, and the graceful elegance of Ségur's manners, formed too striking a contrast with the soldier-like rudeness of the newly-promoted generals, not to make a profound impression on one who could, in the deepest and

weightiest concerns of life, take into calculation the most minute and trivial circumstances.

This disparity, remarkable as it was among the men, was still more so in the ladies of the Court, few of those newly elevated having tact enough either to imitate successfully the polished usages of the old nobility, or resolution sufficient to maintain their original habits without blushing at their own want of breeding.

If I have been led somewhat from the current of my own story by this digression, it is merely that I may passingly note down some of the features of the period—one of the most remarkable in the history of modern Europe, and one which already, to the far-seeing eye of some, betokened the speedy return to those very institutions of monarchy, to uproot which cost the best blood of France, and a revolution the most terrific the world has ever witnessed.

And now, looking back on the great career of that great man, no portion of his history can, perhaps, present anything to compare with the splendour of the Consulate. A long succession of victories—the spoils of half Europe—glory to very satiety had intoxicated the nation—a country flourishing in every element of prosperity—social order restored—a high position amid surrounding nations—and everything that could gratify national ambition obtained—France stood at the very pinnacle of her greatness. Even the splendour of those names who represented the various states of Europe at her Court, seemed to attest her supremacy. The stately and polished Whitworth, conspicuous by the elegance of his appearance and the perfection of his aristocratic bearing; the Russian Ambassador, Marcoff; the Chevalier Azara, the Minister of Spain, the courtier of Europe; Baron de Cetto, the Envoy of Saxony, one of the most distinguished, both by manners and ability, in the whole diplomatic circle, were among those who frequented the First Consul's levées, which already, in the splendour of costume and the gorgeous display of uniform, rivalled the most sumptuous days of the monarchy.

All the long-forgotten ceremonial of a Court was restored. Dinners, most splendid in all the array of pomp and grandeur, were given every week; *lêtes*, that vied with the

luxurious era of Louis XIV. himself, took place frequently; and Paris became the rendezvous for all Europe, curious to behold the rich trophies of successful wars, and mix in the delight of a capital where pleasure reigned triumphant.

The theatre presented an array of genius and talent hitherto unequalled. Talma and Mademoiselle Mars were in the very zenith of their fame, and obtained a large share of Bonaparte's favour, whose tastes were eminently dramatic. In a word, a new era had commenced, and every class and walk, every condition of man, seemed resolved to recompense itself, by the pursuit of pleasure, for the long and dark night of trouble through which it had passed.

While, therefore, the Court of the First Consul partook of such features as those, the circle of Josephine possessed attractions totally different. There, amid her intimate friends, all the charm and fascination of French society held sway; each evening saw assembled around her the wittiest and most polished persons of the day; the gay and spirited talkers who so pre-eminently gave the tone to Parisian society; the handsomest women, and the most distinguished of the *littérateurs* of the period, found ready access to one whose own powers of pleasing have left an undying impression on some, who even still can recall those delightful moments. Such were, in brief, the leading features of the Court then held in the Tuileries, and such the germ of that new order of things which was so soon to burst forth upon astonished Europe, under the proud title of The Empire.



CHAPTER XXIII.

A SURPRISE.

I WAS sitting one evening alone in my quarters, an open volume before me, in which I persuaded myself I was reading, while my thoughts were far otherwise engaged, when my comrade Tascher suddenly entered the room, and, throwing himself into a chair, exclaimed, in a tone of passionate impatience,—

“*Pardieu!* it is a fine thing to be nephew to the first man in France!”

“What has happened?” said I, when I perceived that he stopped short without explaining further.

“What has happened!—enough to drive one mad. Just hear this. You know how fond I am of Paris, and how naturally I must wish to be near the Tuileries, where I have the *entrée* to my aunt’s soirées. Well, there was a vacancy occurred yesterday in the *huitième* hussars—a corps always stationed here or at Versailles—and as I am longing to have a cavalry grade, I waited on Madame Bonaparte to solicit her interest in my favour. She promised of course. The General was to breakfast with her, and it was all settled. She was to ask him for the promotion; and I had not a doubt of success. In fact, if I must confess, I told two or three of my friends, and actually received their congratulations. It so fell out, however, that he did not come to breakfast, nor dinner either—there’s no knowing that man; but what think you? he walked in, this evening, just as we were preparing to act a proverb. Such a scene as it was, to be sure. No one expected him. Most of us were dressed up in costumes of one kind or other; and I, *ma foi*, ridiculous enough, I suppose—I was costumed like a galley-slave. He stood for a second or two at the door with his arms folded, and his stern eyes wandering over the whole room. There was not one amongst us would not have wished

himself many a mile away: even my aunt herself seemed quite confused, and blushed, and grew pale, and blushed again.

"'Ha!' cried he at last, in his dry, short voice. 'Pardon, ladies and gentlemen, I have made a mistake—I believed I was in the palace of the Tuileries, and I find this is the Porte St. Martin.'

"' *Fi donc*, Bonaparte!' cried my aunt, blushing, while with one of her sweetest smiles she endeavoured to bring him back to good humour. 'See, how you have frightened Madame de Narbonne—she'll never be able to play the miller's wife; and Marie here, her tears will wash away all her rouge.'

"'And this amiable gentleman—what is to become of him?' said he, interrupting her, while he laid his hand on my shoulder, and I stood trembling like a culprit beside him.

"'Ah, there!—that's Tascher,' said she, laughingly; and as if happy to escape from her greater embarrassment by any means, she continued: 'Your question comes, indeed, quite *à propos*. I have a request to make in his favour; there's a vacancy in the *huitième*, I think it is—eh, Edward?' I nodded slightly, for if my life depended on it, I could not have uttered a word. 'Now, I am sure he's been sous-lieutenant long enough, and in the infantry too.'

"'Can you ride well, sir?' said he, turning to me with a half frown on his pale face.

"'Yes, General,' replied I, with my heart almost choking me as I spoke.

"'Well, sir, you shall be employed, and in a service worthy your present tastes, if I may judge from your costume. A detachment of prisoners is to march to-morrow from this for the Bagne de Brest—hold yourself in readiness to accompany the military escort. Go, sir, and report yourself to your colonel.' He waved his hand when he had finished, and how I left the room, reached the street, and found myself here, hang me if I can tell you."

"And is there no help for this? must you really go?" said I, compassionating the dejected and sorrow-struck expression of the youth.

"Must I go! *Ma foi*, you know little of this dear uncle

of mine, if you ask such a question. When once his mind's made up, anything like an attempt to argue only confirms his resolve. The best thing now is, to obey and say nothing; for if my aunt remonstrates, I may spend my life in garrison there over the galley-slaves."

A knocking at the outer door interrupted our conversation at this moment, and a corporal of the staff entered, with a despatch-bag at his waist.

"Sous-Lieutenant Tascher," said he, touching his cap, and presenting a large official-looking letter to my companion, who threw it from him on the table, and turned away to hide his confusion. "Monsieur Burke," said the corporal, withdrawing another ominous document from his leathern pouch.

"*Diantre!*" cried Tascher, turning quickly about, "have I got you into a scrape as well as myself? I remember now the General asked me who was my 'comrade.'"

I took the paper with a trembling hand, and tore it open. The first line was all I could read; it was a war-office official, appointing me to the vacant commission in the *huitième* hussars.

Tascher's hand shook as he leaned on my shoulder, and I could feel a convulsive twitching of his fingers as his agitation increased; but in a second or two he recovered his self-command, and taking my hand within both of his, he said, while the large tears were starting from his eyes,—

"I'm glad it's you, Burke," and then turned away unable to say more.

It was some time before I could bring myself to credit my good fortune. Had I been free to choose, I could have desired nothing better nor more to my liking; and when I succeeded at length, then came my embarrassment at my poor friend's disappointment, which must have been still more poignant as contrasted with my success. Tascher, however, had all the creole warmth of temperament. The first burst over, he really enjoyed the thought of my promotion; and we sat up the entire night talking over plans for the future, and making a hundred resolves for contingencies, some of which never arose, and many, when they came, suggested remedies of their own.

At daybreak my comrade's horses came to the door, and

a mounted orderly attended to accompany him to the prison where the convoy were assembled. We shook hands again and again. He was leaving what had been his home for years, Paris—the gay and brilliant city, in whose pleasures he had mixed, and whose fascinations he had tasted. I was parting from one with whom I had lived in a friendship as close as can subsist between two natures essentially different—we both were sad.

"Adieu, Burke!" said he, as he waved his hand for the last time. "I hope you'll command the *huitième* when next we meet."

I hurried into the quarters, which already seemed lonely and deserted, so soon does desolation throw its darkening shadow before it. The sword that had hung above the chimney crosswise on my own was gone; the chako, too, and the pistols were missing; the vacant chair stood opposite to mine; and the isolation I felt became so painful, that I wandered out into the open air, glad to escape the sight of objects, every one of which only suggested how utterly alone I stood in the world, when the departure of one friend had left me companionless.

No one save he who has experienced it can form any just idea of the intense hold a career of any kind will take of the mind of him who, without the ties of country, of kindred, and of friends, devotes all his energies in one direction. The affections that might, under other influences, have grown up—the hopes that might have flourished in the happy sphere of a home, become the springs of a more daring ambition. In proportion as he deserts other roads in life, the path he has struck out for himself seems wider and grander, and his far-seeing eye enables him to look into the long distance with a prophetic vision, where are rewards for his hard-won victories, the recompense of long years of toil. The pursuit, become a passion, gradually draws all into its vortex; and that success which at first he believed only attainable by some one mighty effort, seems at last to demand every energy of his life and every moment of his existence; and as the miser would deem his ruin near, should the most trifling opportunity of gain escape him, so does the ambitious man feel that every incident in life must be made tributary to the success which is his Mammon. It was thus I thought of the

profession of arms; my whole soul was in it; no other wish, no other hope, divided my heart; that passion reigned there alone. How often do we find it in life that the means become the end, that the effort we employ to reach an object takes hold upon our fancy, gains hourly upon our affections, and at length usurps the place of what before had been our idol. As a boy, liberty, the bold assertion of my country's rights, stirred my heart, and made me wish to be a soldier. As years rolled on, the warlike passion sank deeper and deeper in my nature; the thirst for glory grew upon me, and forgetting all save that, I longed for the time when, on the battle-field, I should win my name to fame and honour. In this wise were my musings, as I loitered homeward and entered my quarters. A sealed packet, addressed Sous-Lieutenant Burke—how that humble title made my heart beat—lay on my table. Supposing it referred to my new appointment, I sat down to con it over at my leisure; but no sooner had I torn open the envelope than a card fell to the ground. I took it up hastily, and read, "*D'après l'ordre de Madame Bonaparte, j'ai l'honneur de vous inviter à une soirée*——" "What!" cried I, aloud, "me!—invite me to the Palace! There must be some mistake here." And I turned again to the envelope, where my name was legibly written, with my grade, and the number of my new corps. There could be no doubt of it, and yet was it still inexplicable; I that was so perfectly alone, a stranger, without a friend, save among the humble ranks of the school, how came such a distinction as this to be conferred on me? I thought of Tascher; but then we had lived months together, and such a thing had never been even alluded to. The more I reflected on it, the greater became my difficulty; and in a maze of confusion and embarrassment I passed the day in preparation for the evening, for, as was customary at the period, the invitations for small parties were issued on the very mornings themselves. My first care was to look after the uniform of my new corps, in which I knew I must appear. My last remaining bank-note, the sole survivor of my little stock of wealth, was before me, and I sat calculating with myself the costly outlay of a hussar dress, the full uniform of which had not till now entered into my computation.

Never was my ingenuity more sorely tried than in the endeavour to bring the outlay within the narrow limits of my little purse; and when, at length, I would think that all had been remembered, some small but costly item would rise up against me, and disconcert all my calculations.

At noon I set out to wait on my new colonel, whose quarters were in the Place Vendôme. The visit was a short and not over pleasant one; a crowd of officers filled the rooms, among whom I edged my way with difficulty towards the place where Colonel Marbois was standing. He was a short, thick-set, vulgar-looking man, of about fifty; his moustache and whiskers meeting above the lip, and his bushy, black beard below, gave him the air of a pioneer, which his harsh Breton accent did not derogate from.

"*Ah, c'est vous!*" said he, as my name was announced; "you'll have to learn in future, sir, that officers of your rank are not received at the levées of their colonel. You hear me; report yourself to the *chef d'escadron*, however, who will give you your orders; and mark me, sir, let this be the last day you are seen in that uniform."

A short and not very gracious nod concluded the audience, and I took my leave not the less abashed that I could mark a kind of half smile on most of the faces about me as I withdrew from the crowd. Scarcely in the street, however, when my heart felt light and my step elastic. I was a sous-lieutenant of hussars, and if I did my duty what cared I for the smiles and frowns of my colonel; and had not the General Bonaparte himself told me "that no grade was too high for the brave man who did so?"

I can scarcely avoid a smile even yet as I call to mind the awe I felt on entering the splendid shop of Monsieur Crillac, the fashionable tailor of those days, whose plate-glass windows and showy costumes formed the standing point for many a lounge around the corner of the Rue de Richelieu and the Boulevard. His saloon, as he somewhat ostentatiously called it, was the rendezvous for the idlers of a fashionable world, who spent their mornings canvassing the last gossip of the city, and devising new extrava-

gances in dress. The morning papers, caricatures, prints of fashions, patterns of waistcoats, and new devices for buttons, were scattered over a table, round which, in every attitude of indolence and ease, were stretched some dozen of the exquisites of the period, engaged in that species of half-ennui, half-conversation, that forms a considerable part of the existence of your young men of fashion, of every age and every country. Their frock-coats of light cloth, high-collared, and covered with buttons; their *bottes à revers* reaching only mid leg, and met there by a tight *pantalon collant*; their hair studiously brushed back off their foreheads, and worn long, though not in queue behind, bespoke them as the most accurate types of the mode.

The appearance of a youth in the simple uniform of the Polytechnique in such a place seemed to excite universal astonishment. Such a phenomenon apparently had never been witnessed before; and as they turned fully round to stare at me, it was clear they never deemed that any mark of rudeness could be felt by one so humble as I was. Monsieur Crillac himself, who was sipping his glass of *eau sucrée*, with one arm leaning on the chimney-piece, never deigned to pay me other attention than a half smile, as, with a voice of most patronizing softness, he lisped out,—

“What can we do for you here, Monsieur?”

Apparently the answer to this question was a matter of interest to the party, who suddenly ceased talking to listen.

“I wish to order a uniform,” said I, summoning up all my resolution not to seem abashed. “This is a tailor’s, if I don’t mistake?”

“Monsieur is quite correct,” replied the imperturbable proprietor, whose self-satisfied smile became still more insulting, “but perhaps not exactly what you seek for. Gentlemen who wear your cloth seldom visit us.”

“No, Crillac,” interrupted one of the bystanders; “I never heard that you advertised yourself as fashioner to the Polytechnique, or tailor in ordinary to the corps of *Pompiers*.”

“You are insolent, sir,” said I, turning fiercely round upon the speaker. The words were scarce spoken, when

the party sprang to their legs; some endeavouring to restrain the temper of the young man addressed, others, pressing around, called on me to apologize on the spot for what I had said.

"No, no: let us have his name—his name," said three or four in a breath. "De Beauvais will take the punishment into his own hands."

"Be advised, young gentleman; unsay your words, and go your way," said an elder one of the party, while he added, in a whisper, "De Beauvais has no equal in Paris with the small sword."

"There is my address," said I, seizing a pen, and writing on a piece of paper before me.

"Ha!" said De Beauvais, as he threw his eye on the writing, "he has got his grade, it seems—all the better that; I half shrunk from the ridicule of an affair with a cadet. So you are serious about this?"

"Sir!" said I, all my efforts being barely enough to repress my rising passion.

"Well, well—enough about it. To-morrow morning—the Bois de Boulogne—the rapier. You understand me, I suppose?"

I nodded and was about to leave the place, when I remembered that, in my confusion, I had neither asked my antagonist's name nor rank. "And you, sir," said I, "may I have the honour to learn who you are?"

"*Pardieu!* my young friend," cried one of the others, "the information will not strengthen your nerves; but if you will have it, he is the Marquis de Beauvais, and tolerably well known in that little locality where he expects to meet you to-morrow."

"Till then, sir," replied I, touching my cap, as I turned into the street—not, however, before a burst of laughter rang through the party at a witticism of which I was the object, and the latter part of which only could I catch. It was De Beauvais who spoke. "In which case, Crillac, another artist must take his measure." The allusion could not be mistaken, and, I confess, I did not relish it like the others.

I should, I fear, have fallen very low in the estimate of my companions and associates could the real state of my heart at that moment have been laid open to them.

It was, I freely own, one of great depression. But an hour ago, and life was opening before me with many a bright and cheerful hope; and now, in an instant, was my fortune clouded. Let me not be misunderstood: among the rules of the Polytechnique duelling was strictly forbidden, and although numerous transgressions occurred, so determined was the head of the Government to put down the practice, that the individuals thus erring were either reduced in rank, or their promotion stopped for a considerable period; while the personal displeasure of General Bonaparte rarely failed to show itself with reference to them. Now it was clear to me that some unknown friend, some secret well-wisher, had interested himself in my humble fate—that I owed my newly-acquired rank to his kindness and good offices. What, then, might I not be forfeiting by this unhappy rencontre? Was it not more than likely that such an instance of misconduct, the very day of my promotion, might determine the whole tenor of my future career? What misrepresentation might not gain currency about my conduct? These were sad reflections indeed, and every moment but increased them.

When I reached the college, I called on one of my friends; but not finding him in his quarters, I wrote a few lines, begging he would come over to me the moment he returned. This done, I sat down alone, to think over my adventure, and devise, if I could, some means to prevent its publicity, or, if not that, its being garbled and misstated. Hour after hour rolled past—my wandering thoughts took no note of time—and the deep-tolled bell of the Polytechnique struck eight before I was aware the day was nearly over. Nine was the hour mentioned on my card of invitation; it flashed suddenly on me. What was to be done? I had no uniform save that of the “*école*.” Such a costume in such a place would, I feared, be considered too ridiculous; yet to absent myself altogether was impossible. Never was I in such a dilemma. All my endeavours to rescue myself were fruitless; and at last, worn out with the conflict of my doubts and fears, I stepped into the fiacre and set out for the Palace.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE "PAVILLON DE FLORE."

As my humble carriage slackened its pace to a walk on approaching the Place Caroussel, I for the first time perceived that the open space around was thronged with equipages, moving slowly along in line towards the gate of the Palace. A picket of dragoons was drawn up at the great archway, and mounted *gendarmes* rode up and down to preserve order in the crowd. Before me stretched the long façade of the Tuileries, now lighted up in its entire extent. The rich hangings and costly furniture could be seen even where I was.

What a sinking sense of shame overwhelmed me as I thought of my humble position amid that mighty concourse of all that was great and illustrious in France; and how I shrunk within myself as I thought of the poor scholar of the Polytechnique—for such my dress proclaimed me—mixing with the most distinguished diplomatists and generals of Europe! The rebuke I had met with from my colonel in the morning was still fresh in my recollection, and I dreaded something like a repetition of it.

"Oh! why had I not known that this was a grand reception?" was the ever-rising thought of my mind. My card of invitation said a *soirée*: even that I might have dared—but here was a regular *levée*! Already I was near enough to hear the names announced at the foot of the grand staircase, where ambassadors, senators, ministers of state, and officers of the highest rank succeeded each other in quick succession. My carriage stood now next but two. I was near enough to see the last arrival hand his card to the *huissier* in waiting, and hear his title called out, "Le Ministre de la Guerre," when the person in the carriage before me cried to his coachman, "To the left—the Pavillon de Flore;" and at the same moment the car-

riage turned from the line, and drove rapidly towards a distant wing of the Palace.

"Move up! move up!" shouted a dragoon; "or are you for the *soirée de Madame?*"

"Yes, yes!" said I, hastily, as I heard his question.

"Follow that carriage, then," said he, pointing with his sabre; and in a moment we left the dense file, and followed the sounds of the retiring wheels towards a dark corner of the Palace, where a single lamp over a gate was the only light to guide us. Never shall I forget the sense of relief I felt as I lay back in the carriage, and listened to the hum and din of the vast crowd growing each moment fainter. "Thank Heaven," said I, "it's no *levée*." Scarce half a dozen equipages stood around the door as we drove up, and a single dragoon was the guard of honour.

"Whom shall I announce, sir?" said a *huissier* in black, whose manner was as deferential as though my appearance bespoke an ambassador. I gave my name and followed him up a wide stair, where the deep velvet carpet left no footfall audible. A large bronze candelabra, supporting a blaze of wax-lights, diffused a light like day on every side. The doors opened before us as if by magic, and I found myself in an antechamber, where the *huissier*, repeating my name to another in waiting, retired. Passing through this, we entered a small drawing-room, in which sat two persons engaged at a chess-table, but who never looked up, or noticed us, as we proceeded. At last the two wings of a wide folding-door were thrown open, and my name was announced in a low but audible voice.

The *salon* into which I now entered was a large and splendidly-furnished apartment, whose light, tempered by a species of *abat-jour*, gave a kind of soft mysterious effect to everything about, and made even the figures, as they sat in little groups, appear something almost dramatic in their character. The conversation, too, was maintained in a half-subdued tone—a gentle murmur of voices, that, mingling with the swell of music in another and distant apartment, and the plash of a small fountain in a vase of gold-fish in the room itself, made a strange but most pleasing assemblage of sounds. Even in the momentary glance which, on entering, I threw around me, I perceived that no studied etiquette or courtly stateliness prevailed. The

guests were disposed in every attitude of lounging ease and careless *abandon*; and it was plain to see that all, or nearly all, about were intimates of the place.

As the door closed behind me, I stood half uncertain how to proceed. Unhappily, I knew little of the habitudes of the great world; and every step I took was a matter of difficulty.

"I think you will find Madame Bonaparte in that room," said a middle-aged and handsome man, whose mild voice and gentle smile did much to set me at my ease; "but perhaps you don't know her."

I muttered something I meant to be a negative, to which he immediately replied,—

"Then let me present you. There is no ceremony here, and I shall be your groom of the chambers—but here she is. Madame la Consulesse, this young gentleman desires to make his respects."

"Ha! our friend of the Polytechnique—Monsieur Burke, is it not?"

"Yes, Madame," said I, bowing low, and blushing deeply as I recognized, in the splendidly-attired and beautiful person before me, the lady who so kindly held the water to my lips the day of my accident at the school.

"Why, they told me you were promoted—a hussar, I think."

"Yes, Madame—but—but——"

"You are too fond of old associations to part from them easily," said she, laughing. "Come here, Stephanie, and see a miracle of manhood, that could resist all the *clinquant* of a hussar for the simple costume of the *École Militaire*. Monsieur de Custine, this is my young friend of whom I told you the other day."

The gentleman, the same who had so kindly noticed me, bowed politely.

"And now I must leave you together, for I see they are teasing poor Madame Lefebvre." And with a smile she passed on into a small boudoir from which the sounds of merry laughter were proceeding.

"You don't know any one here?" said Monsieur de Custine, as he motioned me to a place beside him on a sofa; "nor is there any very remarkable person here to point out to you this evening. The First Consul's

levée absorbs all the celebrities—but by-and-by they will drop in to pay their respects, and you'll see them all. The handsome woman yonder with her fan before her is Madame Beauharnais Lavalette, and the good-looking young fellow in the staff uniform is Monsieur de Melcy, a stepson of General Rapp."

"And the large handsome man with the embroidered coat who passed through so hurriedly?"

"Yes, he is somebody—that's Decrès, the *Ministre de la Marine*—he is gone to the levée; and there, next the door, with his eyes cast down, and his hands folded, that is the *Abbé Maynal*, one of the most 'spirituel' men of the day; but I suppose you'd much rather look at the beauties of the Court than hear long stories about literature and politics; and there is the gem of loveliness among them."

I turned my eyes as he spoke, and close beside me, engaged in an eager conversation with an old lady, stood a young and most beautiful girl. Her long hair, through which, in the then mode, violets were wreathed and interwoven, descended in rich masses of curl over a neck white as marble. The corsage of her dress, which, in imitation of Greek costume, was made low, displayed her well-rounded shoulders to the greatest advantage; and though rather below than above the middle size, there was a dignity and grace in the air of her figure, and a certain elegance about her slightest movements, that was most fascinating.

"And the 'Rose de Provence'—how is she this evening?" said my companion, rising suddenly, and presenting himself with a smile before her.

"Ah! you here, Monsieur de Custine? we thought you had been at Nancy."

The accent, the tone of voice in which she said these few words, sent a thrill through me, and as I looked again, I recognized the young lady who stood at Madame Bonaparte's side on the memorable day of my fall. Perhaps my astonishment made me start; for she turned round towards me, and with a soft and most charming smile saluted me.

"How they are laughing in that room!" said she, turning towards her other companions. "Monsieur de

Custine has deserted his dear friend this evening, and left her to her unassisted defence."

"*Ma foi*," replied he, "I got ill rewarded for my advocacy. It was only last week, when I helped her out through one of her blunders in grammar, she called me a 'ganache' for my pains."

"How very ungrateful! You that have been interpreter to her—her tutor for the entire winter—without whom she could neither have obtained an ice nor a glass of water."

"So is it; but you are all ungrateful. But I think I had better go and pay my respects to her; pray come along with me."

I followed the party into a small room fitted up like a tent, where, amid some half-dozen persons assembled around like an audience, sat a large, florid, and good-looking person, her costume of scarlet velvet, turban, and robe adding to the flushed and high-coloured expression of her features. She was talking in a loud voice, and with an accent of such *patois* as I should much more naturally have expected in a remote faubourg than in the gilded *salons* of the Tuileries. She had been relating some anecdotes of military life, which came within her own experience; and evidently amused her auditory as much by her manner as the matter of her narrative.

"*Oui, parbleu*," said she, drawing a long breath, "I was only the wife of a sergeant in the 'Gardes Françaises' in those days; but they were pleasant times, and the men one used to see were men indeed. They were not as much laced in gold, nor had not so much finery on their jackets; but they were bold, bronzed, manly fellows. You'd not see such a poor, miserable little fellow as De Custine there, in a whole demi-brigade." When the laugh this speech caused, and in which her own merry voice joined, subsided, she continued: "Where will you find, now, anything like the Twenty-second of the line? Pioche was in that—poor Pioche!—I tied up his jaw in Egypt when it was smashed by a bullet. I remember, too, when the regiment came back; your husband, the General, reviewed them in the court below, and poor Pioche was quite offended at not being noticed. 'We were good friends,' quoth he, 'at Mount Tabor, but he forgets all that now;

that's what comes of a rise in the world. "Le Petit Caporal" was humble enough once, I warrant him; but now he can't remember me.' Well, they were ordered to march past in line, and there was Pioche, with his great dark eyes fixed on the General, and his big black beard flowing down to his waist; but no, he never noticed him no more than the tambour that beat the rappel. He could bear it no longer. His head was twisting with impatience and chagrin; and he sprang out of the lines, and seizing a brass gun—a *pièce de quatre*—he mounted it like a fusee to his shoulder, and marched past, calling out, 'Tu'—he always *tu-toied* him—'*tu te rappelles maintenant, n'est-ce pas, petit?*'"

No one enjoyed this little story more than Madame Bonaparte herself, who laughed for several minutes after it was over. Story after story did she pour forth in this way; most of them, however, had their merit in some personality or other, which, while recognized by the rest, had no attraction for me. There was in all she said the easy self-complacency of a kind-hearted but vulgar woman, vain of her husband, proud of his services, and perfectly indifferent to the habits and usages of a society whose manners she gave herself no trouble to imitate, nor of whose ridicule was she in the least afraid.

I sauntered from the room alone, to wander through the other apartments, where objects of art and curiosities of every kind were profusely scattered. The marbles of Greece and Rome, the strange carvings of Egypt, the rich vases of Sèvres were there, amid cabinet pictures of the rarest and most costly kind. Those delicious landscapes of the time of Louis XV., where every charm of nature and art was conveyed upon the canvas; the cool arbours of Versailles, with their terraced promenades and hissing fountains—the subjects which Vanloo loved to paint, and which that voluptuous Court loved to contemplate; the long alleys of shady green, where gay groups were strolling in the mellow softness of an autumn sunset; those proud dames whose sweeping garments brushed the velvet turf, and at whose sides, uncovered, walked the chivalry of France, how did they live again in the bright pencil of Moucheron, and how did they carry one in fancy to the great days of the Monarchy. Strange place for

them, too, the boudoir of her whose husband had uprooted the ancient dynasty they commemorated—had erased from the list of kings that proudest of all the royal stocks in Europe. Was it the narrow-minded glory of the usurper that loved to look upon the greatness he had humbled, that brought them there? or was it rather the well-spring of that proud hope just rising in his heart that he was to be successor of those great kings, whose history formed the annals of Europe itself? As I wandered on, captivated in every sense by the charm of what to me was a scene in fairyland, I came suddenly before a picture of Josephine, surrounded by the ladies of her Court. It was by Isabey, and had all the delicate beauty and transparent finish of that delightful painter. Beside it was another portrait by the same artist, and I started back in amazement at the resemblance. Never had colour better caught the rich tint of a southern complexion; the liquid softness of eye, the full and sparkling intelligence of ready wit and bright fancy, all beamed in that lovely face. It needed not the golden letters in the frame which called it "La Rose de Provence." I sat down before it unconsciously, delighted that I might gaze on such beauty unconstrained. The white hand leaned on a balustrade, and seemed almost as if stretching from the very canvas. I could have knelt and kissed it. That was the very look she wore the hour I saw her first—it had never left my thoughts day or night: the half-rising blush, the slightly-averted head, the mingled look of impatience and kindness—all were there; and so entranced had I become, that I feared each instant lest the vision would depart, and leave me dark and desolate. The silence of the room was almost unbroken—a distant murmur of voices, the tones of a harp, were all I heard, and I sat, I know not how long, thus wrapped in ecstasy.

A tall screen of Chinese fabric separated the part of the room I occupied from the rest, and left me free to contemplate alone those charms which each moment grew stronger upon me. An hour might perhaps have thus elapsed, when suddenly I heard the sound of voices approaching, but in a different direction from that of the *salons*. They were raised above the ordinary tone of speaking, and one in particular sounded in a strange accent of mingled passion

and sarcasm, which I shall never forget. The door of the room was flung open before I could rise from my chair, and two persons entered, neither of whom could I see from my position behind the screen.

"I ask you, again and again, is the treaty of Amiens a treaty, or is it not?" said a harsh, imperious tone I at once recognized as that of the First Consul, while his voice actually trembled with anger.

"My Lord Whitworth observed, if I mistake not," replied a measured and soft accent, where a certain courtier-like unctiousness prevailed, "that the withdrawal of the British troops from Malta would follow, on our making a similar step as regards our forces in Switzerland and Piedmont."

"What right have they to make such a condition? They never complained of the occupation of Switzerland at the time of the treaty. I will not hear of such a stipulation. I tell you, Monsieur de Talleyrand, I'd rather see the English in the Faubourg St. Antoine than in the Island of Malta. Why should we treat with England as a continental power? Of India, if she will—and as to Egypt, I told my Lord that sooner or later it must belong to France."

"A frankness he has reason to be thankful for," observed M. de Talleyrand, in a voice of sarcastic slyness.

"*Que voulez-vous?*" replied Bonaparte, in a raised tone; "they want a war, and they shall have it: what matter the cause—such treaties of peace as these had better be covered with black crape." Then dropping his voice to a half-whisper, he added: "You must see him to-morrow, explain how the attacks of the English press have irritated me—how deeply wounded I must feel at such a license permitted under the very eyes of a friendly government—plots against my life encouraged—assassination countenanced. Repeat that Sebastiani's mission to Egypt is merely commercial. That although prepared for war, our wish, the wish of France, is peace. That the armaments in Holland are destined for the colonies. Show yourself disposed to treat, but not to make advances. Reject the word *ultimatum*, if he employ it. The phrase implies a parley between a superior and an inferior. This is no longer the France that remembers an English com-

missary at Dunkirk. If he do not use the word, then remark on its absence—say, these are not times for longer anxiety—that we must know, at last, to what we are to look. Tell him the Bourbons are not still on the throne here. Let him feel with whom he has to deal."

"And if he demand his passport," gravely observed Talleyrand, "you can be in the country for a day—at Plombières—at St. Cloud."

A low, subdued laugh followed these words, and they walked forward towards the *salons*, still conversing, but in a whispered tone.

A cold perspiration broke over my face and forehead, the drops fell heavily down my cheek, as I sat an unwilling listener of this eventful dialogue. That the fate of Europe was in the balance I knew full well—and, ardently as I longed for war, the dreadful picture that rose before me damped much of my ardour—while a sense of my personal danger, if discovered where I was, made me tremble from head to foot. It was, then, with a sinking spirit, that I retraced my steps towards the *salons*, not knowing if my absence had not been remarked and commented on. How little was I versed in such society, where each came and went as it pleased him; where the most brilliant beauty, the most spiritual conversationalist, left no gap by absence, and where such as I were no more noticed than the statues that held the wax-lights.

The *salons* were now crowded—ministers of state, ambassadors, general officers in their splendid uniforms, filled the apartments, in which the din of conversation and the sounds of laughter mingled. Yet, through the air of gaiety which reigned throughout—the tone of light and flippant smartness which prevailed—I thought I could mark here and there, among some of the ministers, an appearance of excitement, and a look of preoccupation, little in unison with the easy intimacy which all seemed to possess. I looked on every side for the First Consul himself, but he was nowhere to be seen. Monsieur Talleyrand, however, remained—I recognized him by his soft and measured accent, as he sat beside Madame Bonaparte, and was relating some story in a low voice, at which she seemed greatly amused. I could not help

wondering at the lively and animated character of features, beneath which were concealed the dark secrets of state affairs, the tangled mysteries of political intrigue. To look on him, you would have said, "There sits one whose easy life flows on, unruffled by this world's chances." Not so the tall and swarthy man, whose dark moustache hangs far below his chin, and who leans on the chimney-piece yonder—the large veins of his forehead are swollen and knitted, and his deep voice seems to tremble with strong emotion as he speaks.

"Pray, monsieur, who is that officer yonder?" said I, to a gentleman beside me, and whose shoulder was half turned away.

"That," said he, raising his glass,—“that is Savary, the Minister of Police. And, pardon, you are Mr. Burke—is't not so?"

I started as he pronounced my name, and looking fixedly at him, recognized the antagonist with whom I was to measure swords the next morning in the Bois de Boulogne; I coloured at the awkwardness of my situation, but he, with more ease and self-possession, resumed,—

"Monsieur, this is, to me at least, a very fortunate meeting. I have called twice, in the hope of seeing you this evening, and am overjoyed now to find you here. I behaved very ill to you this morning—I feel it now—I almost felt it at the time. If you will accept my apology for what has occurred, I make it most freely. My character is in no need of an affair to make me known as a man of courage—yours, there can be no doubt of. May I hope you agree with me? I see you hesitate—perhaps I anticipate the reason—you do not know how far you can, or ought to receive such an amende?" I nodded, and he continued: "Well, I am rather a practised person in these matters, and I can safely say you may."

"Be it so, then," said I, taking the hand he proffered, and shaking it warmly; "I am too young in the world to be my own guide, and I feel you would not deceive me."

A gratified look, and a renewed pressure of the hand, replied to my speech.

"One favour more—you mustn't refuse me. Let us sup together—my *caïèche* is below—people are already

taking their leave here—and, if you have no particular reason for remaining——”

“None—I know no one.”

“*Allons*, then,” said he, gaily taking my arm; and I soon found myself descending the marble stairs, beside the man I had expected to stand opposed to in deadly conflict a few hours later.



CHAPTER XXV.

THE SUPPER AT "BEAUVILLIERS'S."

"WHERE to?" asked the coachman, as we entered the *calèche*.

"Beauvilliers," said the Marquis, throwing himself back in his seat, and remaining for some minutes silent. At last, as if suddenly recollecting that we were strangers to each other, he said, "You know Beauvilliers, of course?"

"No," replied I, with hesitation; "I really have not any acquaintance."

"*Parbleu!*" said he, laughing, "you ought at least to have his friendship. He is the most celebrated restaurateur of this or any other age; no one has carried the great art of the cuisine to a higher perfection, and his cellars are unequalled in Paris—but you shall pronounce for yourself."

"Unhappily my judgment is of little value. Do you forget that the diet-roll of the Polytechnique is a bad school for gastronomy?"

"But a glorious preparation for it," interrupted he. "How delightful must be the enjoyment to the unsophisticated palate of those first impressions which a *carpe à la Chambord*, a pheasant *truffé*, a dish of *ortolans à la Provençale* inspire! But here we are. Our party is a small one—an old *préfet* of the south, an *abbé*, a secretary of the

Russian embassy, and ourselves." This information he gave me as we mounted a narrow and winding stair, dimly lighted by a single lamp. On reaching the landing, however, a waiter stood in readiness to usher us into a small apartment decorated with all the luxury of gold and plate glass, so profusely employed in the interior of all cafés. The guests already mentioned were there, and evidently awaiting our arrival with no small impatience.

"As usual, Henri," said the old man, whom I guessed to be the préfet—"as usual—an hour behind your appointment."

"Forgive him, monsieur," said the abbé, with a simper. "The fascinations of a Court——"

The grimace the old man made at this last word threw the whole party into a roar of laughter, which only ceased by the Marquis presenting me in all form to each of his friends.

"*A table, à table*, for Heaven's sake!" cried the préfet, ringing the bell, and bustling about the room with a fidgety impatience.

This was, however, unneeded; for in less than five minutes the supper made its appearance, and we took our places at the board.

The encomiums pronounced as each dish came and went satisfied me that the feast was unexceptionable. As for myself, I ate away, only conscious that I had never been so regaled before, and wondering within me how far ingenuity had been exercised to produce the endless variety that appeared at table. The wine, too, circulated freely; and Champagne, Bordeaux, and Chambertin followed each other in succession, as the different meats indicated the peculiar vintage. In the conversation I could take no part; it was entirely gastronomic; and no man ever existed more ignorant of the seasons that promised well for truffles, or the state of the atmosphere that threatened acidity to the vines.

"Well, Henri," said the préfet, when the dessert made its appearance, and the time for concluding the gourmand dissertation seemed arrived—"well, and what news from the Tuileries?"

"Nothing—absolutely nothing," said he, carelessly. "The same people; the same topics; the eternal game of

tric-trac with old Madame d'Angerton; Denon tormenting some new victim with a mummy or a map of Egypt; Madame Lefebvre relating camp anecdotes——"

"Ah, she is delightful!" interrupted the préfet.

"So thinks your chief, at least, Askoff," said De Beauvais, turning to the Russian. "He sat on the sofa beside her for a good hour and a half."

"Who sat near him on the other side?" slyly asked the other.

"On the other side? I forget—no, I remember it was Monsieur de Talleyrand and Madame Bonaparte; and, now I think of it, he must have overheard what they said."

"Is it true, then, that Bonaparte insulted the English ambassador at the reception? Askoff heard it as he left the Rue St. Honoré."

"Perfectly true. The scene was a most outrageous one; and Lord Whitworth retired, declaring to Talleyrand—at least, so they say—that without an apology being made, he would abstain from any future visits at the Tuileries."

"But what is to come of it?—tell me that. What is to be the result?"

"*Pardieu!* I know not. A reconciliation to-morrow; an article in the *Moniteur*; a dinner at the Court; and then another rupture, and another article."

"Or a war," said the Russian, looking cautiously about, to see if his opinion met any advocacy.

"What say you to that, *mon ami!*?" said De Beauvais, turning to me. "Glad enough, I suppose, you'll be to win your epaulettes as colonel."

"That, too, is on the cards," said the abbé, sipping his glass quietly. "One can credit anything these times."

"Even the Catholic religion, abbé," said De Beauvais, laughing.

"Or the Restoration," replied the abbé, with a half-malicious look at the préfet, which seemed greatly to amuse the Russian.

"Or the Restoration!" repeated the préfet, solemnly, after him—"or the Restoration!" And then filling his glass to the brim, he drained it to the bottom.

"It is a hussar corps you are appointed to?" said De

Beauvais, hastily turning towards me, as if anxious to engage my attention.

"Yes; the *huitième*," said I: "do you know them?"

"No; I have few acquaintances in the army."

"His father, sir," said the préfet, with a voice of considerable emphasis, "was an old *garde du corps* in those times when the sword was only worn by gentlemen."

"So much the worse for the army," whispered the abbé in an undertone, that was sufficiently audible to the rest to cause an outbreak of laughter.

"And when," continued the préfet, undisturbed by the interruption, "birth had its privileges."

"Among the rest, that of being the first beheaded," murmured the inexorable abbé.

"Were truffles dear before the Revolution, préfet?" said De Beauvais, with a half-impertinent air of simplicity.

"No, sir; nothing was dear save the king's favour."

"Which could also be had for paying for," quoth the abbé.

"The *Moniteur* of this evening, gentlemen," said the waiter, entering with the paper, whose publication had been delayed some two hours beyond the usual period.

"Ah, let us see what we have here," said De Beauvais, opening the journal and reading aloud:

"General Espinasse is appointed to the command of the fourth corps, stationed at Lille, and Major-General Lannes to the fortress of Montreil, vacant by——' No matter—here it is. 'Does the English Government suppose that France is one of her Indian possessions, without the means to declare her wrongs, or the power to avenge them? Can they believe that rights are not reciprocal, and that the observance of one contracting party involves nothing on the part of the other?'"

"There, there, De Beauvais; don't worry us with that tiresome nonsense."

"Or," continued the marquis, still reading aloud, "do they presume to say that we shall issue no commercial instructions to our agents abroad lest English susceptibility should be wounded by any prospect of increased advantages to our trade?"

"Our trade!" echoed the préfet, with a most contemptuous intonation on the word.

"Ah! for those good old times, when there was none!" said the abbé, with such a semblance of honest sincerity as drew an approving smile from the old man.

"Hear this, préfet," said De Beauvais: "'From the times of Colbert to the present'—what think you? the allusion, right royal, is it not?—'From the times of Colbert our negotiations have been always conducted in this manner.'"

"Sir, I beseech you read no more of that intolerable nonsense."

"And here, continued the Marquis, "follows a special invocation of the benediction of Heaven on the just efforts which France is called on to make, to repress the insolent aggression of England—abbé, this concerns you."

"Of course," said he, meekly. "I am quite prepared to pray for the party in power: if Heaven but leaves them there, I must conclude they deserve it."

A doubtful look, as if he but half understood him, was the only reply the old préfet made to this speech; at which the laughter of the others could no longer be repressed, and burst forth most heartily.

"But let us read on. Whose style is this, think you?—'France possessed within her dominion every nation from the North Sea to the Adriatic; and how did she employ her power?—in restoring to Batavia self-government, in giving liberty to Switzerland, and in ceding Venice to Austria, while the troops at the very gates of Vienna are halted and repass the Rhine once more. Are these the evidences of ambition—are these the signs of that overweening lust of territory with which England dares to reproach us? And if such passions prevailed, what was easier than to have indulged them? Was not Italy our own? Were not Batavia, Switzerland, Portugal, all ours? But no, peace was the desire of the nation—peace at any cost. The colony of St. Domingo, that immense territory, was not conceived a sacrifice too great to secure such a blessing.'"

"*Pardieu!* De Beauvais, I can bear it no longer."

"You must let me give you the reverse of the medal. Hear now what England has done."

"He writes well, at least for the taste of newspaper readers," said the abbé, musingly; "but still he only

understands the pen as he does the sword ; it must be a weapon of attack."

"Who is the writer, then ?" said I, in a half-whisper.

"Who !—can you doubt it ?—Bonaparte himself. What other man in France would venture to pronounce so authoritatively on the prospects and the intentions of the nation ?"

"Or who," said the abbé, in his dry manner, "could speak with such accuracy of the 'Illustrious and Magnanimous Chief' that rules her destinies ?"

"It is growing late," said the préfet, with the air of one who took no pleasure in the conversation, "and I start for Rouen to-morrow morning."

"Come, come, préfet, one bumper before we part," said De Beauvais ; "something has put you out of temper this evening ; yet I think I know a toast can restore you to good humour again."

The old man lifted his hand with a gesture of caution, while he suddenly directed a look towards me.

"No, no ; don't be afraid," said De Beauvais, laughing ; "I think you'll acquit me of any rashness : fill up, then, and here let us drink to one in the old palace of the Tuileries who, at this moment, can bring us back in memory to the most glorious days of our country."

"*Pardieu !* that must be the First Consul, I suppose," whispered the abbé to the préfet, who dashed his glass with such violence on the table as to smash it in a hundred pieces.

"See what comes of impatience," cried De Beauvais, laughing ; "and now you have not wherewithal to pledge my fair cousin the 'Rose of Provence.'"

"The Rose of Provence," said each in turn, while, excited by the wine, of which I had drunk freely, and carried away by the enthusiasm of the moment, I echoed the words in such a tone as drew every eye upon me.

"Ah ! you know my cousin, then ?" said De Beauvais, looking at me with a strange mixture of curiosity and astonishment.

"No," said I, "I have seen her—I saw her this evening at the Palace."

"Well, I must present you," said he, smiling good-naturedly.

Before I could mutter my acknowledgment, the party had risen, and were taking leave of each other for the night.

"I shall see you soon again, Burke," said De Beauvais, as he pressed my hand warmly; "and now, adieu." With that we parted; and I took my way back towards the Polytechnique, my mind full of strange incidents of this the most eventful night in my quiet and monotonous existence.



CHAPTER XXVI.

THE "TWO VISITS."

AMID all the stirring duties of the next day—amid all the excitement of a new position—my mind recurred continually to the events of the previous twenty-four hours. Now dwelling on the soirée at the Palace—the unaccustomed splendour, the rank, the beauty I had witnessed; now on that eventful moment I spent behind the screen; then on my strange rencontre with my antagonist, and that still stranger supper that followed it.

It was not, indeed, without certain misgivings, which I could neither account for nor dismiss from my mind, that I reflected on the character and conversation of my new associates.

The tone of levity in which they dared to speak of him whose name was to me something bordering on idolatry—the liberty with which they ventured to canvass his measures and his opinions, even to ridiculing them, were so many puzzles to my mind; and I half reproached myself for having tamely listened to language which now, as I thought over it, seemed to demand my notice. Totally ignorant of all political intrigue—unconscious that any party did or could exist in France, save that of the First Consul himself—I could find no solution to the enigma,

and at last began to think that I had been exaggerating to myself the words I had heard, and permitting my ignorance to weigh with me, where, with more knowledge, I should have seen nothing reprehensible. And if the spirit in which they discussed the acts of Bonaparte differed from what I had been accustomed to, might it not rather proceed from my own want of acquaintance with the usages of society, than any deficiency in attachment on their sides? The *préfet* was, of course, as an officer of the Government, no mean judge of what became him—the *abbé*, too, as a man of education and in holy orders, was equally unlikely to express unbecoming opinions; the Russian scarcely spoke at all; and as for De Beauvais, his careless and headlong impetuosity made me feel easy on his score; and so I reasoned myself into the conviction that it was only the ordinary bearing and every-day habit of society to speak thus openly of one who, in the narrower limits of our little world, was deemed something to worship.

Shall I own what then I could scarcely have confessed to myself, that the few words De Beauvais spoke at parting—the avowed cousinship with her they called "*La Rose de Provence*"—did much to induce this conviction on my mind? while his promise to present me was a pledge I could not possibly believe consistent with any but right loyal thoughts and honest doctrines. Still, I would have given anything for one friend to advise with—one faithful counsellor to aid me. But again was I alone in the world, and, save the short and not over-flattering reception of my colonel, I had neither seen nor spoken to one of my new corps.

That evening I joined my regiment and took up my quarters in the barracks, where already the rumour of important political events had reached the officers; and they stood in groups discussing the chances of a war, or listening to the *Moniteur*, which was read out by one of the party. What a strange thrill it sent through me to think that I was privy to the deepest secret of that important step on which the peace of Europe was resting—that I had heard the very words as they fell from the lips of him on whom the destiny of millions then depended! With what a different interpretation to me came those

passages in the Government journal which breathed of peace, and spoke of painful sacrifices to avoid a war, for which already his very soul was thirsting; and how, to my young heart, did that passion for glory exalt him who could throw all into the scale! The proud position he occupied—the mighty chief of a mighty nation—the adulation in which he daily lived—the gorgeous splendour of a Court no country in Europe equalled—all these, and more—his future destiny—did he set upon the cast for the great game his manly spirit gloried in.

In such thoughts as these I lived as in a world of my own; companionship I had none. My brother-officers, with few exceptions, had risen from the ranks, and were of that class which felt no pleasure save in the coarse amusements of the barrack-room, or the vulgar jests of the service. The better classes lived studiously apart from these, and made no approaches to intimacy with any newly-joined officer with whose family and connections they were unacquainted; and I, from my change of country, stood thus alone, unacknowledged and unknown. At first this isolation pained and grieved me, but gradually it became less irksome; and when at length they who had at first avoided and shunned my intimacy showed themselves disposed to know me, my pride, which before would have been gratified by such an acknowledgment, was now wounded, and I coolly declined their advances.

Some weeks passed in this manner, during which I never saw or heard of De Beauvais, and at length began to feel somewhat offended at the suddenness with which he seemed to drop an intimacy begun at his own desire; when one evening, as I had returned to my barrack-room after parade, I heard a knock at my door. I rose and opened it, when, to my surprise, I beheld De Beauvais before me. He was much thinner than when I last saw him, and his dress and appearance all betokened far less of care and attention.

"Are these your quarters?" said he, entering and throwing a cautious look about. "Are you alone here?"

"Yes," said I, "perfectly."

"You expect no one?"

"Not any," said I again, still more surprised at the agitation of his manner, and the evident degree of anxiety he laboured under.

"Thank Heaven!" said he, drawing a deep sigh as he threw himself on my little camp-bed, and covered his face with his hands.

Seeing that something weighed heavily on him, I half feared to interfere with the current of his thoughts, and merely drew my chair and sat down beside him.

"I say, Burke, *mon cher*, have you any wine? Let me have a glass or two, for, save some *galette*, and that not the best either, I have tasted nothing these last twenty-four hours."

I soon set before him the contents of my humble larder, and in a few moments he rallied a good deal, and looking up with a smile said,—

"I think you have been cultivating *your* education as gourmand since I saw you. That pasty is worthy our friend in the Palais Royal. Well, and how have you been since we met?"

"Let me rather ask *you*," said I. "You are not looking so well as the last time I saw you. Have you been ill?"

"Ill! no, not ill. Yet I can't say so; for I have suffered a good deal, too. No, my friend; I have had much to harass and distress me. I have been travelling, too, long distances and weary ones—met some disappointments, and altogether the world has not gone so well with me as I think it ought. And now of you—what of yourself?"

"Alas!" said I, "if you have met much to annoy, I have only lived a dull life of daily monotony. If it has had little to distress, there is fully as little to cheer; and I half suspect the fine illusions I used to picture to myself of a soldier's career had very little connection with reality."

As De Beauvais seemed to listen with more attention than such a theme would naturally call for, I gradually was drawn into a picture of my barrack life, in which I dwelt at length on my own solitary position, and the want of that companionship which formed the chief charm of my schoolboy life. To all this he paid a marked attention—now questioning me on some unexplained point—now agreeing with me in what I said by a word or a gesture.

"And do you know, Burke," said he, interrupting me in my description of those whose early coldness of man-

ner had chilled my first advances—"and do you know," said he, impetuously, "who these aristocrats are? The sons of honest *bourgeois* of Paris. Their fathers are worthy men of the Rue Vivienne or the Palais—excellent people, I've no doubt; but very far better judges of point lace and *pâté de Périgord*, than disputed precedence and armorial quarterings. Far better the others, the humble soldiers of fortune, whose highest pride is their own daring, their own undaunted heroism. Well, well," added he, after a pause, "I must get you away from this—I can manage it in a day or two. You shall be sent down to Versailles with a detachment."

I could not help starting with surprise at these words, and through all the pleasure they gave me my astonishment was still predominant.

"I see you are amazed at what I say, but it is not so wonderful as you think. My cousin has only to hint to Madame Bonaparte, who is at present there, and the thing is done."

I blushed deeply as I thought of the agency through which my wishes were to meet accomplishment, and turned away to hide my embarrassment.

"By the bye, I have not presented you to her yet. I've had no opportunity; but now I shall do so at once."

"Pray, tell me your cousin's name," said I, anxious to say anything to conceal my confusion. "I've only heard her name called 'La Rose de Provence.'"

"Yes, that was a silly fancy of Madame la Consulesse, because Marie is *Provençale*. But her name is De Rochfort, at least her mother's name; for, by another caprice, she was forbidden by Bonaparte to bear her father's name. But this is rather a sore topic with me. Let us change it. How did you like my friends the other evening? The abbé is agreeable, is he not?"

"Yes," said I, hesitating somewhat; "but I am so unaccustomed to hear General Bonaparte discussed so freely——"

"That absurd Polytechnique!" interrupted De Beauvais. "How many a fine fellow has it spoiled with its ridiculous notions and foolish prejudices!"

"Come, come," said I, "you must not call prejudices the attachment which I, and all who wear an epaulette,

feel in our glorious chief. There, there; don't laugh, or you'll provoke me; for if I, an alien, feel this, how should you, who are a Frenchman born, sympathize with such a proud career?"

"If you talk of sympathy, Burke, let me ask you, have you ever heard speak of certain old families of these realms, who have been driven forth and expatriated to seek a home amongst strangers, themselves the descendants of the fairest chivalry of our land—the proud scions of St. Louis?—and has your sympathy never strayed across sea to mingle with *their* sorrows?" His voice trembled as he spoke, and a large tear filled his eye and tracked its way along his cheek, as the last word vibrated on his tongue; and then, as if suddenly remembering how far he had been carried away by momentary impulse, he added, in an altered voice: "But what have we to do with these things? Our road is yet to be travelled by either of us. Yours a fair path enough, if it only fulfil its early promise. The fortunate fellow that can win his grade while yet a schoolboy——"

"How came you to know——?"

"Oh! I know more than that, Burke; and, believe me, if my foolish conduct the first day we met had led to anything disastrous, I should have passed a life of sorrow for it ever after; but we shall have time enough to talk over all these matters in the green alleys of Versailles, where I hope to see you before a week be over. Great events may happen ere long, too. Burke, you don't know it, but I can tell you, a war with England is at this moment on the eve of declaration."

"Perhaps," said I, somewhat piqued by the tone of superiority in which he had spoken for some minutes, and anxious to assume for myself a position which, I forgot, conferred no credit by the manner of its attainment, "I know more of *that* than you are aware of."

"Oh," replied he, carelessly, "the gossip of a mess is but little to be relied on. The *sabreurs* will always tell you that the order to march is given."

"I don't mean that," said I, haughtily. "My information has a higher source—the highest of all—General Bonaparte himself."

"How!—what!—Bonaparte himself!"

"Listen to me," said I; and, hurried on by a foolish vanity and a strange desire I cannot explain, to make a confidant in what I felt to be a secret too weighty for my own bosom, I told him all that I had overheard when seated behind the screen in the *salon* at the Tuileries.

"You heard this—you, yourself?" cried he, as his eyes flashed, and he grasped my arm with an eager grip.

"Yes, with my own ears I heard it," said I, half trembling at the disclosure I made, and ready to give all I possessed to recall my words.

"My friend, my dear friend," said he, impetuously, "you must hesitate no longer—be one of us."

I started at the words, and, growing pale with agitation as the very thought of the importance of what I had related flashed across me, I stammered out, "Take care what you propose to me, De Beauvais. I do not, I cannot, fathom your meaning now; but if I thought that anything like treachery to the First Consul—that anything traitorous to the great cause of liberty for which he has fought and conquered, was meditated, I'd go forthwith and tell him, word for word, all I have spoken now, even though the confession might, as it would, humble me for ever, and destroy all my future hope of advancement."

"And be well laughed at for your pains, foolish boy," said he, throwing himself back in his chair, and bursting out into a fit of laughter. "No, no, Burke, you must not do anything half so ridiculous, or my pretty cousin could never look at you without a smile ever after; and, *à propos* of that—when shall I present you? That splendid jacket, and all that finery of dolman there, will make sad work of her poor heart."

I blushed deeply at the silly impetuosity I had betrayed myself into, and muttered some equally silly apology for it; still, young as I was, I could perceive that my words made no common impression on him, and would have given my best blood to recall them.

"Do you know, De Beauvais," said I, affecting as much of coolness as I could—"do you know, I half regret having told you this. The manner in which I heard this conversation—though, as you will see, quite involuntary on my part—should have prevented my ever having repeated it;

and now the only reparation I can make is, to wait on my colonel, explain the whole circumstance, and ask his advice."

"In plain words, to make public what at present is only confided to a friend. Well, you think the phrase too strong for one you have seen but twice—the first time not exactly on terms such as warrant the phrase. But come, if you can't trust me, I'll see if I can't trust you."

He drew at these words a roll of paper from his pocket, and was proceeding to open it on the table, when a violent knocking was heard at my door.

"What's that—who can it be?" said he, starting up, and growing pale as death.

The look of terror in his face appalled me, and I stood, not able to reply, or even move towards the door, when the knocking was repeated much louder, and I heard my name called out; pointing to a closet which led from the room, and without speaking a word, I walked forward and unlocked the door; a tall man, wrapped in a blue cloak, and wearing a cocked-hat, covered with oilskin, stood before me, accompanied by a sergeant of my troop.

"This is the sous-lieutenant, sir," said the sergeant, touching his cap.

"That will do," replied the other; "you may leave us now." Then turning to me he added, "May I have the favour of a few minutes' conversation with you, Mr. Burke? I am Monsieur Gisquet, *chef de police* of the department."

A trembling ran through me at the words, and I stammered out something scarce audible in reply. Monsieur Gisquet followed me as I led the way into my room, which already had been deserted by De Beauvais, and, casting a quick glance around, he leisurely took off his hat and cloak and drew a chair towards the table.

"Are we alone, sir?" said he, in a measured tone of voice, while his eye fell with a peculiar meaning on a chair which stood opposite to mine, on the opposite side of the stove.

"I had a friend with me when you knocked," I muttered, in a broken and uncertain accent; "but perhaps——" Before I could finish my sentence the door of the cabinet slowly opened, and De Beauvais

appeared, but so metamorphosed I could scarcely recognize him; for, short as the interval was, he had put on my old uniform of the Polytechnique, which, from our similarity in height, fitted him perfectly.

"All safe, Tom," said he, stealing out, with an easy smile on his countenance. "*Par St. Denis!* I thought it was old Legrange himself come to look for me. Ah, monsieur, how d'ye do? You have given me a rare fright to-night. I came to spend the day with my friend here, and, as ill-luck would have it, have outstayed my time. The *école* closes at nine, so that I'm in for a week's arrest at least."

"A cool confession this, sir, to a minister of police," said Gisquet, sternly, while his dark eyes surveyed the speaker from head to foot.

"Not when that minister is called Gisquet," said he, readily, and bowing courteously as he spoke.

"You know me, then?" said the other, still peering at him with a sharp look.

"Only from your likeness to a little boy in my company," said he; "Henri Gisquet: a fine little fellow he is, and one of the cleverest in the school."

"You are right, sir, he is my son," said the minister, as a pleased smile passed over his swarthy features. "Come, I think I must get you safe through your dilemma. Take this; the officer of the night will be satisfied with the explanation, and Monsieur Legrange will not hear of it."

So saying, he seized a pen, and writing a few lines rapidly on a piece of paper, he folded it note fashion, and handed it to De Beauvais.

"A handsome ring, sir," said he, suddenly, and holding the fingers within his own; "a very costly one, too."

"Yes, sir," said De Beauvais, blushing scarlet. "A cousin of mine——"

"Ha, ha! an *amourette*, too. Well, well, young gentleman, no need of further confessions. Lose no more time here—*bon soir*."

"Adieu, Burke," said De Beauvais, shaking my hand with a peculiar pressure.

"Adieu, Monsieur Gisquet. This order will pass me through the barrack, won't it?"

"Yes; to be sure. You need fear no interference with my people either, go where you will this evening."

"Thanks, sir, once more," said he, and departed.

"Now for our business, Mr. Burke," said the minister, opening his packet of papers before him, and commencing to con over its contents. "I shall ask you a few questions, to which you will please to reply with all the accuracy you can command, remembering that you are liable to be called on to verify any statement hereafter on oath. With whom did you speak on the evening of the second of May, at the soirée of Madame Bonaparte?"

"I scarcely remember if I spoke to any one save Madame herself; a strange gentleman, whose name I forget, presented me; one or two others, also unknown to me, may have spoken a passing word or so; and when coming away I met Monsieur de Beauvais."

"Monsieur de Beauvais! who is he?"

"*Ma foi*, I can't tell you. I saw him the day before for the first time: we renewed our acquaintance, and we supped together."

"At Beauvilliers's?" said he, interrupting.

"*Pardieu!* monsieur," said I, somewhat stung at the espionage on my movements, "you seem to know everything so well already, it is quite needless to interrogate me any further."

"Perhaps not," replied he, coolly. "I wish to have the names of the party you supped with."

"Well, there was one who was called the préfet, a large, full, elderly man."

"Yes, yes, I know him," interrupted Gisquet again; "and the others?"

"There was an abbé, and a secretary of the Russian mission."

"No other?" said he, in a tone of disappointment.

"No one, save De Beauvais and myself—we were but five in all."

"Did no one come in during the evening?"

"No, not any."

"Nor did any leave the party?"

"No; we separated at the same moment."

"Who accompanied you to the barracks?"

"No one. I returned alone."

"And this Monsieur De Beauvais; you can't tell anything of him? What age is he? what height?"

"About my own," said I, blushing deeply at the thought of the events of a few moments back. "He may be somewhat older; but he looks not much more than twenty-one or two."

"Have you mentioned any of these circumstances to any of your brother officers or to your colonel?"

"No, sir, never."

"Very right, sir. These are times in which discretion is of no common importance. I have only to recommend similar circumspection in future. It is probable that some of these gentlemen may visit you and write to you—they may invite you to sup or to dine; if so, sir, accept the invitation; be cautious, however, not to speak of this interview to any one. Remember, sir, I am the messenger of one who never forgave a breach of trust, but who also never fails to reward loyalty and attachment. If you be but prudent, Mr. Burke, your fortune is certain."

With these words, Monsieur Gisquet threw his cloak over his shoulder, and raising his hat, he bowed formally to me, and withdrew, leaving me to meditations which, I need not say, were none of the happiest.

If my fears were excited by the thought of the acquaintances I had so rashly formed, so also was my pride insulted by the system of watching to which my movements had been subjected; and deeper still, by the insulting nature of the proposal the minister of police had not scrupled to make to me, on reflecting over which, only, did I perceive how base and dishonourable it was.

"What!" asked I, of myself, "is it a spy—is it a false underhand betrayer of the men into whose society I have been admitted on terms of friendly intercourse he would make of me? What saw he in me or in my actions, to dare so far? Was not the very cloth I wear enough to guard me against such an insult?" Then came the maddening reflection, "Why had I not thought of this sooner? Why had I not rejected his proposal with scorn, and told him that I was not of the stuff he looked for?"

But what is it that he wished to learn? and who were these men, and what were their designs? These were ques-

tions that flashed across me, and I trembled to think how deeply implicated I might become, at any moment, in plans of which I knew nothing—merely from the imprudence with which I had made their acquaintance. The escape of De Beauvais, if discovered, would also inevitably involve me, and thus did I seem hurried along by a train of incidents, without will or concurrence, each step but increasing the darkness around me.

That Gisquet knew most of the party was clear; De Beauvais alone seemed personally unknown to him. What, then, did he want of me? Alas! it was a tangled web I could make nothing of—and all I could resolve on was, to avoid in future all renewal of intimacy with De Beauvais, to observe the greatest circumspection with regard to all new acquaintance, and, since the police thought it worth their while to set spies upon my track, to limit any excursions, for some time at least, to the routine of my duty, and the bounds of the barrack-yard. These were wise resolutions, and if somewhat late in coming, yet not without their comfort; above all, because, in my heart, I felt no misgivings of affection, no lack of loyalty to him who was still my idol.

"Well, well," thought I, "something may come of this—perhaps a war; if so, happy shall I be to leave Paris and all its intrigues behind me, and seek distinction in a more congenial sphere, and under other banners than a police minister would afford me."

With thoughts like these I fell asleep to dream over all events of the preceding day, and wake the next morning with an aching head and confused brain—my only clear impression being, that some danger hung over me, but from what quarter, and how, or in what way it was to be met or averted, I could not guess.

The whole day I felt a feverish dread lest De Beauvais should appear. Something whispered me that my difficulties were to come of my acquaintance with him, and I studiously passed my time among my brother officers, knowing that, so long as I remained among them, he was not likely to visit me; and when evening came, I gladly accepted an invitation to a barrack-room supper, which, but the night before, I should have declined without hesitation.

This compliance on my part seemed well taken by my companions, and, in their frank and cordial reception of me, I felt a degree of reproach to myself for my having hitherto lived estranged from them. We had just taken our places at table, when the door was flung wide open, and a young captain of the regiment rushed in, waving a paper over his head, as he called out,—

“Good news, *mes braves*, glorious news for you! Listen to this: ‘The English ambassador has demanded his passports, and left Paris; expresses are sent off to the fourth corps, to move towards the coast; twelve regiments have received orders to march; so that before my Lord leaves Calais, he may witness a review of the army.’”

“Is this true?”

“It is all certain.”

“Read it; here’s the *Moniteur*, with the official announcement.”

In an instant a dozen heads were bent over the paper, each eager to scan the paragraph so long and ardently desired.

“Come, Burke, I hope you have not forgotten your English,” said the Major; “we shall want you soon to interpret for us in London, if, *pardieu*, we can ever find our way through the fogs of that ill-starred island.”

I hung my head without speaking—the miserable isolation of him who has no country, is a sad and sickening sense of want no momentary enthusiasm, no impulse of high daring, can make up for. Happily for me, all were too deeply interested in the important news to remark me, or pay any attention to my feelings.



CHAPTER XXVII.

THE MARCH TO VERSAILLES.

THEY who remember the excited state of England on the rupture of the peace of Amiens—the spirit of military ardour that animated every class and condition of life—the national hatred, carried to the highest pitch by the instigations and attack of a violent press, can yet form but an imperfect notion of the mad enthusiasm that prevailed in France on the same occasion.

The very fact that there was no determinate and precise cause of quarrel added to the exasperation on both sides. It was less like the warfare of two great nations than the personal animosity of two high-spirited and passionate individuals, who, having interchanged words of insult, resolve on the sword as the only arbiter between them.

All that the long rivalry of centuries, national dislike, jealousy in every form, and ridicule in a thousand shapes, could suggest, were added to the already existing hate, and gave to the coming contest a character of blackest venom. In England, the tyrannic rule of Bonaparte gave deep offence to all true lovers of liberty, and gave rise to fears of what the condition of their own country would become, should he continue to increase his power by conquest. In France, the rapid rise to honour and wealth, the career of arms so singularly favoured, made partisans of war in every quarter of the kingdom. The peaceful arts were but mean pursuits compared with that royal road to rank and riches, the field of battle; and their self-interest lent its share in forming the spirit of hostility, which wanted no element of hatred to make it perfect.

Paris, where so lately nothing was heard save the roll of splendid equipages—the din of that gay world whose business is amusement—where amid gilded *salons* the voluptuous habits of the Consulate mixed with the less

courtly but scarce less costly display of military splendour, became now like a vast camp. Regiments poured in daily to resume their march the next morning; the dull rumble of ammunition-waggons and caissons, the warlike clank of mounted cavalry, awoke the citizens at daybreak; the pickets of hussar corps and the dusty and travel-stained infantry soldiers filled the streets at nightfall; yet, through all, the mad gaiety of this excited nation prevailed. The cafés were crowded with eager and delighted faces; the tables spread in the open air were occupied by groups whose merry voices and ready laughter attested that war was the pastime of the people, and the very note of preparation a tocsin of joy and festivity. The walls were placarded with inflammatory addresses to the patriotism and spirit of France. The papers teemed with artful and cleverly-written explanations of the rupture with England, in which every complaint against that country was magnified, and every argument put forward to prove the peaceful desires of that nation, whose present enthusiasm for war was an unhappy commentary on the assertion. The good faith of France was extolled—the moderation of the First Consul dwelt upon; and the treachery of that "perfidious Albion, that respected not the faith of treaties," was displayed in such irrefragable clearness, that the humblest citizen thought the cause his own, and felt the coming contest the ordeal of his own honour.

All the souvenirs of the former wars were invoked to give spirit to the approaching struggle, and they were sufficiently numerous to let no week pass over without at least one eventful victory to commemorate.

Now it was Kellerman's cuirassiers, whose laurel-wreathed helmets reminded the passing stranger that on that day eight years they tore through the dense ranks of the Austrians, and sabred the gunners at the very guns. Now it was the Polish regiments—the steel-clad lancers—who paraded before the Tuileries, in memory of the proud day they marched through Montebello with that awful sentence on their banners, "Venice exists no longer." Here were corps of infantry, intermingled with dragoons, pledging each other as they passed along; while the names of Castiglione, Bassano, and Roveredo rang through

the motley crowd—the very children, “*les enfants de troupe*,” seemed filled with the warlike enthusiasm of their fathers; and each battalion, as it moved past, stepped to the encouraging shouts of thousands, who gazed with envious admiration on the heroes of their country.

Never did the pent-up feelings of a nation find vent in such a universal torrent of warlike fervour as now filled the land. The clank of the sabre was the music that charmed the popular ear; and the “*coquette vivandière*,” as she tripped along the gravel avenues of the Tuileries gardens, was as much an object of admiration as the most splendidly-attired beauty of the “*Faubourg St. Germain*.” The whole tone of society assumed the feature of the political emergency. The theatres only represented such pieces as bore upon the ancient renown of the nation in arms—its victories and conquests. The artists painted no other subjects; and the literature of the period appealed to few other sympathies than are found in the rude manners of the guard-room, or around the watch-fires of the bivouac. Pegault Lebrun was the popular author of the day; and his works are even now no mean indication of the current tastes and opinions of the period.

The predictions too hastily made by the English journals that the influence of Bonaparte in France could not survive the rupture of that peace which had excited so much enthusiasm, were met by a burst of national unanimity that soon dispelled the delusive hope. Never was there a greater error than to suppose that any prospect of commercial prosperity, any vista of wealth and riches, could compensate to Frenchmen for the intoxication of that glory in which they lived as in an orgie. Too many banners floated from the deep aisles of the “*Invalides*,” too many cannon, the spoils of the Italian and German wars, bristled on the rampart, not to recall the memory of those fête days when a bulletin threw the entire city into a frenzy of joy. The Louvre and the Luxembourg, too, were filled with the treasures of conquered states, and these are not the guarantees of a long peace.

Such, in brief, was the state of Paris when the declaration of war by Great Britain once more called the nation to arms. Every regiment was at once ordered to make up its full complement to the war standard, and the furnaces

were employed in forging shot and casting cannon throughout the length and breadth of France. The cavalry corps were stationed about St. Omer and Compiègne, where a rich corn country supplied forage in abundance. Among the rest the order came for the *huitième* to march; one squadron only was to remain behind, chosen to execute *le service des dépêches* from St. Cloud and Versailles to Paris, and to this I belonged.

From the evening of Monsieur Gisquet's visit I had never seen or heard of De Beauvais, and at last the hope grew in me that we were to meet no more, when suddenly the thought flashed across my mind—this is what he spoke of; he promised I should be sent to Versailles! Can it be chance, or is this his doing? These were difficult questions to solve, and gave me far more embarrassment than pleasure. My fear that my acquaintance with him was in the end to involve me in some calamity, was a kind of superstition which I could not combat, and I resolved at once to see my colonel, with whom, happily, I was now on the best of terms, and endeavour to exchange with some other officer, any being willing to accept a post so much more agreeable than a mere country quarter. I found the old man busied in the preparations for departure; he was marking out the days of march to the adjutant as I entered.

"Well, Burke," said he, "you are the fortunate fellow this time; your troop remains behind."

"It is on that account, sir, I am come. You'll think my request a strange one, but if it be not against rule, would you permit me to exchange my destination with another officer?"

"What—eh? the boy's mad! Why, it's to Versailles you are going."

"I know, sir; but, somehow, I'd rather remain with the regiment."

"This is very strange—I don't understand it," said he, leisurely; "come here." With that he drew me into the recess of a window where we could talk unheard by others. "Burke," continued he, "I'm not the man to question my young fellows about secrets which they'd rather keep for themselves; but there is something here more than common. Do you know that in the order it was your squadron was specially marked out, all the officers'

names were mentioned, and yours particularly, for Versailles ? ”

A deadly paleness and a cold chill spread over my face ; I tried to say some commonplace, but I could not utter more than the words, “ I feared it.” Happily for me he did not hear them, but, taking my hand kindly, said,—

“ I see it all ; some youthful folly or other would make you better pleased to leave Paris just now. Never mind, stormy times are coming, you’ll have enough on your hands presently ; and let me advise you to make the most of your time at Versailles, for, if I’m not mistaken, you’ll see much more of camps than courts for some time to come.”

The rest of that day left me but little time for reflection ; but in such short intervals as I could snatch from duty, one thought ever rose to my mind : Can this be De Beauvais’s doing ? Has he had any share in my present destination, and with what object ? “ Well,” said I to myself at last, “ these are but foolish fears after all, and may be causeless ones. If I but follow the straight path of my duty, what need I care if the whole world intrigued and plotted around me ? And, after all, was it not most likely that we should never see each other again ? ”

The day was just breaking when we left Paris ; the bright beams of a May morning’s sun were flickering and playing in the rippling river that ran cold and grey beneath ; the tall towers of the Tuileries threw their long shadows across the Place Caroussel, where a dragoon regiment was encamped. They were already astir, and some of the men were standing around the fountains with their horses, and others were looking after the saddles and accoutrements in preparation for the march ; a half-expiring fire here and there marked where some little party had been sitting together, while the jars and flasks about bespoke a merry evening. A trumpeter sat, statue-like, on his white horse, his trumpet resting on his knee, surveying the whole scene, and as if deferring to the last the wakeful summons that should rouse some of his yet sleeping comrades. I could see thus much as we passed. Our road led along the quay towards the Place Louis XV., where an infantry battalion with four guns was picketed. The men were breakfasting and preparing for the route. They were part of the *grands armée* under orders for Boulogne.

We soon traversed the Champs Elyseés, and entered the open country. For some miles it was merely a succession of large corn-fields, and here and there a small vineyard, that met the eye on either side; but as we proceeded farther we were girt in by rich orchards in full blossom, the whole air loaded with perfume. Neat cottages peeped from the woody enclosures, the trellised walls covered with honeysuckles and wild roses; the surface, too, was undulating, and waved in every imaginable direction, offering every variety of hill and valley, precipice and plain, in even the smallest space. As yet no peasant was stirring, no smoke curled from a single chimney, and all, save the song of the lark, was silent. It was a peaceful scene, and a strong contrast to that we left behind us; and whatever ambitious yearnings filled my heart as I looked upon the armed ranks of the mailed cuirassiers, I felt a deeper sense of happiness as I strayed along those green alleys through which the sun came slanting sparingly, and where the leaves only stirred as their winged tenants moved among them.

We travelled for some hours through the dark paths of the Bois de Boulogne, and again emerged in a country wild and verdant as before. And thus passed our day, till the setting sun rested on the tall roof of the great Palace, and lit up every window in golden splendour as we entered the town of Versailles.

I could scarce avoid halting as I rode up the wide terrace of the Palace. Never had I felt before the overcoming sense of grandeur which architecture can bestow. The great facade, in its chaste and simple beauty, stretched away to a distance, where dark lime-trees closed the background, their tall summits only peeping above the lofty terrace in which the château stands. On that terrace, too, were walking a crowd of persons of the Court, the full-dress costume showing that they had but left the *salons* to enjoy the cool and refreshing air of the evening. I saw some turn and look after our travel-stained and dusty party, and confess I felt a half sense of shame at our wayworn appearance. I had not long to suffer such mortification, for ere we marched more than a few minutes, we were joined by a *Maréchal de Logis*, who accompanied us to our quarters— one of the buildings adjoining the Palace

—where we found everything in readiness for our arrival ; and there I, to my surprise, discovered that a most sumptuous supper awaited me—a politeness I was utterly a stranger to, not being over-cognizant of the etiquette and privilege which await the officer on guard at a royal palace.



CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE PARK OF VERSAILLES.

THE instructions delivered to me soon after my arrival in Versailles convinced me that the transmission of despatches was not the service we were called on to discharge, but merely a pretence to blind others as to our presence ; the real duty being the establishment of a cordon around the royal Palace, permitting no one to enter or pass within the precincts who was not provided with a regular leave, and empowering us to detain all suspected individuals, and forward them for examination to St. Cloud.

To avoid all suspicion as to the true object, the men were ordered to pass from place to place, as if with despatches, many being stationed in different parts of the park ; my duty requiring me to be continually on the alert to visit these pickets, and make a daily report to the Préfet de Police at Paris.

What the nature of the suspicion, or from what quarter Monsieur Savary anticipated danger, I could not even guess ; and, though I well knew that his sources of information were unquestionable, I began at last to think that the whole was merely some plot devised by the police themselves, to display uncommon vigilance and enhance their own importance. This conviction grew stronger as day by day I remarked that no person more than ordinary had even approached near the town of Versailles itself,

while the absurd exactitude of inquiry as to every minute thing that occurred went on just as before.

While my life passed on in this monotonous fashion, the little Court of Madame Bonaparte seemed to enjoy all its accustomed pleasure. The actors of the Français came down expressly from Paris, and gave nightly representations in the Palace; *fourgons* continued to arrive from the capital with all the luxuries for the table; new guests poured in day after day, and the lighted-up saloons, and the sounds of music that filled the Court, told each evening that whatever fear prevailed without, the minds of those within the Palace had little to cause depression.

It was not without a feeling of wounded pride I saw myself omitted in all the invitations; for, although my rank was not sufficient of itself to lead me to expect such an attention, my position as the officer on guard would have fully warranted the politeness, had I not even already received marks of civility while in Paris. From time to time, as I passed through the park, I came upon some of the Court party; and it was with a sense of painful humiliation I observed that Madame Bonaparte had completely forgotten me, while from one whose indifference was more galling still, I did not even obtain a look in passing. How had I forfeited the esteem which voluntarily they had bestowed on me—the good opinion which had raised me from an humble cadet of the Polytechnique to a commission in one of the first corps in the service? Under what evil influence was I placed? Such were the questions that forced themselves on me night and day; that haunted my path as I walked, and my dreams at night. As the impression grew on me, I imagined that every one I met regarded me with a look of distance and distrust; that each saw in me one who had forfeited his fair name by some low or unworthy action, till at last I actually avoided the walks where I was likely to encounter the visitors of the Palace, and shunned the very approach of a stranger, like a guilty thing. All the brilliant prospects of my soldier's life, that a few days back shone out before me, were now changed into a dreamy despondence. The service I was employed on—so different from what I deemed became a chivalrous career—was repugnant to all my feelings; and when the time for visiting my pickets

came, I shrank with shame from a duty that suited rather the spy of the police than the officer of hussars.

Every day my depression increased. My isolation, doubly painful from the gaiety and life around me, seemed to mark me out as one unfit to know, and lessened me in my own esteem; and as I walked the long, dark alleys of the park, a weighty load upon my heart, I envied the meanest soldier of my troop, and would willingly have changed his fortune with my own. It was a relief to me even when night came—the shutters of my little room closed, my lamp lighted—to think that there at least I was free from the dark glances and sidelong looks of all I met; that I was alone with my own sorrow,—no contemptuous eye to pierce my sad heart, and see in my gloom a self-convicted criminal. Had I one, but one friend to advise with, to pour out all my sufferings before him, and say, “Tell me, how shall I act? Am I to go on enduring? or where shall I—where can I vindicate my fame?”

With such sad thoughts for company, I sat one evening alone; my mind now recurring to the early scenes of my childhood, and to that harsh teaching which even in infancy had marked me for suffering; now straying onward to a vision of the future I used to paint so brightly to myself, when a gentle tap at the door aroused me.

“Come in,” said I, carelessly, supposing it a sergeant of my troop. The door slowly opened, and a figure wrapped in a loose horseman’s cloak entered.

“Ah! lieutenant, don’t you know me?” said a voice, whose peculiar tone struck me as well known—“the Abbé d’Ervan, at your service.”

“Indeed!” said I, starting with surprise, not less at the unexpected visitor himself than at the manner of his appearance. “Why, abbé, you must have passed the sentinel.”

“And so I did, my dear boy,” replied he, as he folded up his cloak leisurely on one chair, and seated himself on another opposite me. “Nothing wonderful in that, I suppose?”

“But the countersign—they surely asked you for it?”

“To be sure they did, and I gave it: ‘Vincennes,’ an easy word enough. But come, come, you are not going to play the police with me. I have taken you in on my way

back to St Cloud, where I am stopping just now, to pay you a little visit and talk over the news."

"Pardon me once more, my dear abbé, but a young soldier may seem over-punctilious. Have you the privilege to pass through the royal park after nightfall?"

"I think I have shown you that already, my most rigid inquisitor, otherwise I should not have known the password. Give me your report for to-morrow. Ah, here it is. What's the hour now? A quarter to eleven. This will save you some trouble." So saying, he took a pen and wrote in a large free hand, "The Abbé d'Ervan from the Château d'Ancre to St. Cloud." "Monsieur Savary will ask you no further questions, trust me. And now, if you have got over all your fears and disquietudes, may I take the liberty to remind you that the château is ten leagues off—that I dined at three, and have eaten nothing since. Abbés, you are aware, are privileged gastronomists; and the family of D'Ervan have a most unhappy addiction to good things. A poulet, however, and a flask of Chablis will do for the present; for I long to talk with you."

While I made my humble preparations to entertain him, he rambled on in his usual free and pleasant manner—that mixture of smartness and carelessness which seemed equally diffused through all he said, imparting a sufficiency to awake, without containing anything to engage too deeply the listener's attention.

"Come, come, lieutenant, make no apology for the fare: the *pâté* is excellent; and as for the Burgundy, it is easy enough to see your Chambertin comes from the Consul's cellar. And so you tell me that you find this place dull, which I own I'm surprised at. These little soirées are usually amusing; but perhaps at your age the dazzling gaiety of the ball-room is more attractive."

"In truth, abbé, the distinction would be a matter of some difficulty to me, I know so little of either. And indeed, Madame la Consulesse is not over likely to enlighten my ignorance: I have never been asked to the Palace."

"You are jesting, surely?"

"Perfectly in earnest, I assure you. This is my third week of being quartered here; and not only have I not been invited, but, stranger still, Madame Bonaparte

passed and never noticed me; and another, one of her suite, did the same: so you see there can be no accident in the matter."

"How strange!" said the abbé, leaning his head on his hand; and then, as if speaking to himself, muttered, "But so it is, there is no such tyrant as your *parvenu*. The caprice of sudden elevation knows no guidance. And you can't even guess at the cause of all this?"

"Not with all my ingenuity could I invent anything like a reason."

"Well, well, we may find it out yet. These are strange times altogether, lieutenant. Men's minds are more unsettled than ever they were. The Jacobin begins to feel he has been labouring for nothing: that all he deems the rubbish of a monarchy has been removed, only to build up a greater oppression. The soldier sees his conquests have only made the fortune of one man in the army, and that one not overmindful of his old companions. Many begin to think—and they may have some cause for the notion—that the old family of France knew the interests of the nation best after all; and certain it is, they were never ungrateful to those who served them. Your countrymen had always their share of favour shown them. You do surprise me when you say you've never been invited."

"So it is though; and, worse still, there is evidently some secret reason. Men look at me as if I had done something to stain my character and name."

"No, no, you mistake all that. This new and patch-work Court does but try to imitate the tone of its leader. When did you see De Beauvais?"

"Not for some months past. Is he in Paris?"

"No. The poor fellow has been ill. He's in Normandy just now, but I expect him back soon. There is a youth who might be anything he pleased: his family, one of the oldest in the south; his means abundant; his own ability first-rate; but his principles are of that inflexible material that won't bend for mere convenience' sake. He does not like—he does not approve of the present government of France."

"What would he have, then? Does not Bonaparte satisfy the ambition of a Frenchman? Does he wish a greater name than that at the head of his nation?"

"That's a brilliant lamp before us; but see there," cried the abbé, as he flung open the shutter, and pointed to the bright moon that shone pale and beautiful in the clear sky—"see there! Is there not something grander far in the glorious radiance of the orb that has thrown its lustre on the world for ages? Is it not a glorious thought to revel in the times long past, and think of those, our fathers, who lived beneath the same bright beams, and drank in the same golden waters? Men are too prone to measure themselves with one of yesterday. They find it hard to wonder at the statue of him whom they have themselves placed on the pedestal. Feudalism, too, seems a very part of our nature."

"These are thoughts I've never known, nor would I now wish to learn them," said I; "and as for me, a hero needs no ancestry to make him glorious in my eyes."

"All true," said the abbé, sipping his glass, and smiling kindly on me; "a young heart should feel as yours does; and time was when such feelings had made the fortune of their owner; but even now the world is changed about us. The gendarmes have the mission that once belonged to the steel-clad cuirassiers, and, in return, the hussar is little better than a *mouchard*."

The blood mounted to my face and temples and throbbed in every vein and artery of my forehead, as I heard this contemptuous epithet applied to the corps I belonged to—a sarcasm that told not less poignantly on me, that I felt how applicable it was to my present position.

He saw how deeply mortified the word had made me; and, putting his hand in mine, with a voice of winning softness he added, "One who would be a friend must risk a little now and then; as he who passes over a plank before his neighbour will sometimes spring to try its soundness, even at the hazard of a fall. Don't mistake me, lieutenant, you have a higher mission than this. France is on the eve of a mighty change. Let us hope it may be a happy one. And now it's getting late—far later, indeed, than is my wont to be abroad—and so I'll wish you good night. I'll find a bed in the village. And since I have made you out here, we must meet often."

There was something—I could not define what exactly—that alarmed me in the conversation of the abbé; and

lonely and solitary as I was, it was with a sense of relief I saw him take his departure.

The pupil of a school where the Consul's name was never mentioned without enthusiasm and admiration, I found it strange that any one should venture to form any other estimate of him than I was used to hear; and yet in all he said I could but faintly trace out anything to take amiss. That men of his cloth should feel warmly towards the exiled family was natural enough. They could have but few sympathies with the soldier's calling, and, of course, felt themselves in a very different position now from what they once had occupied. The restoration of Catholicism was, I well knew, rather a political and social than a religious movement; and Bonaparte never had the slightest intention of replacing the Church in its former position of ascendancy, but rather of using it as a state engine, and giving a stability to the new order of things, which could only be done on the foundation of prejudices and convictions old as the nation itself.

In this way the rising generation looked on the priests; and in this way had I been taught to regard the whole class of religionists. It was, then, nothing wonderful if ambitious men among them, of whom D'Erwan might be one, felt somewhat indignant at the post assigned them, and did not espouse with warmth the cause of one who merely condescended to make them the tool of his intentions. "Yes, yes," said I to myself, "I have defined my friend the abbé; and though not a very dangerous character after all, it's just as well I should be on my guard. His being in possession of the password, and his venturing to write his name in the police report, are evidences that he enjoys the favour of the Préfet de Police. Well, well, I'm sure I am heartily tired of such reflections. Would that the campaign were once begun! The roll of a platoon and the deep thunder of an artillery fire would soon drown the small whispering of such miserable plottings from one's head."

About a week passed over after this visit, in which, at first, I was rather better pleased that the abbé did not come again; but as my solitude began to press more heavily on me, I felt a kind of regret at not seeing him. His lively tone in conversation, though spiced with that

moqueur spirit which Frenchmen nearly all assume, amused me greatly; and little versed as I was in the world or in its ways, I saw that he knew it thoroughly. Such were my thoughts as I returned home one evening along the broad alley of the park, when I heard a foot coming rapidly up behind me.

"I say, lieutenant," cried the voice of the very man I was thinking of, "your people are terribly on the alert to-night; they refused to let me pass, until I told them I was coming to you; and here are two worthy fellows who won't take my word for it without your corroboration."

I then perceived that two dismounted dragoons followed him at the distance of a few paces.

"All right, men," said I, passing my arm beneath the abbé's, and turning again towards my quarters. "Wouldn't they take the password, then?" continued I, as we walked on.

"*Ma foi*, I don't know, for I haven't got it."

"How—not got it?"

"Don't look so terribly frightened, my dear boy! You'll not be put under arrest or any such mishap on my account; but the truth is, I've been away some days from home, and have not had time to write to the minister for the order; and as I wanted to go over to St. Cloud this evening, and as this route saves me at least a league's walking, of course I availed myself of the privilege of our friendship both to rest my legs and have a little chat with you. Well, and how do you get on here now? I hope the château is more hospitable to you—eh?—not so?—that is most strange. But I have brought you a few books which may serve to while away the hours; and as a recompense, I'll ask you for a supper."

By this time we were at the door of my quarters, where, having ordered up the best repast my cuisine afforded, we sat down to await its appearance. Unlike the former evening, the abbé now seemed low and depressed—spoke little, and then moodily, over the unsettled state of men's minds, and the rumours that pervaded Paris of some momentous change—men knew not what—and thus by a stray phrase, a chance word, or an unfinished sentence, gave me to think that the hour was approaching for some great political convulsion.

“ But, lieutenant, you never told me by what accident you came first amongst us. Let me hear your story. The feeling with which I ask is not the fruit of an impertinent curiosity. I wish sincerely to know more about one in whose fortunes I have taken a deep interest. De Beauvais told me the little anecdote which made you first acquainted; and though the event promised but little of future friendship, the circumstances have turned out differently. You have not one who speaks and thinks of you more highly than he does. I left him this morning not many miles from this. And now that I think of it, he gave me a letter for you—here it is.” So saying, he threw it carelessly on the chimney-piece, and continued: “ I must tell you a secret of poor De Beauvais, for I know you feel interested in him. You must know, then, that our friend is desperately in love with a very beautiful cousin of his own, one of the suite of Madame Bonaparte. She’s a well-known Court beauty; and if you had seen more of the Tuileries, you’d have heard of La Rose de Provence.”

“ I have seen her, I think,” muttered I, as my cheek grew crimson, and my lips trembled.

“ Well,” resumed the ablé, and without noticing my embarrassment, “ this love affair, which I believe began long ago, and might have ended in marriage—for there is no disparity of rank, no want of wealth, nor any other difficulty to prevent it—has been interrupted by General Bonaparte, because, and for no other reason, mark ye, than that De Beauvais’s family were Bourbonists. His father was a captain of the Garde du Corps, and his grandfather a grand falconer, or something or other, with Louis XV. Now, the young marquis was well enough inclined to go with the current of events in France. The order of things once changed, he deemed it best to follow the crowd, and frequented the Tuileries like many others of his own politics—I believe you met him there—till one morning lately he resolved to try his fortune where the game was his all. And he waited on Madame Bonaparte to ask her consent to his marriage with his cousin—for I must tell you that she is an orphan, and in all such cases the parental right is exercised by the head of the Government. Madame referred him coldly to the General,

who received him more coldly still, and instead of replying to his suit, as he expected, broke out into invectives against De Beauvais's friends—called them *chouans* and assassins—said they never ceased to plot against his life with his most inveterate enemies, the English—that the exiled family maintained a corps of spies in Paris, of whom he half suspected him to be one; and, in a word, contrived to heap more insult on him in one quarter of an hour than, as he himself said, his whole family had endured from the days of St. Louis to the present. De Beauvais from that hour absented himself from the Tuileries, and indeed almost entirely from Paris—now living with his friends in Normandy, now spending a few weeks in the south; but at last he has determined on his course, and means to leave France for ever. I believe the object of his coming here at this moment is to see his cousin for the last time. Perhaps his note to you has some reference to it."

I took the letter with a trembling hand—a fear of something undefined was over me—and, tearing it open, read as follows:—

"DEAR FRIEND,—The Abbé d'Ervan will deliver this into your hands, and, if you wish it, explain the reason of the request it contains, which is simply that you will afford me the shelter of your quarters for one day in the park at Versailles. I know the difficulty of your position; and if any other means under heaven presented itself I should not ask the favour, which, although I pledge my honour not to abuse, I shall value as the dearest a whole life's gratitude can repay. My heart tells me that you will not refuse the last wish of one you will never see after this meeting. I shall wait at the gate below the Trianon at eleven o'clock on Friday night, when you can pass me through the sentries.

"Yours, ever and devoted,

"HENRI DE BEAUVAIS."

"The thing is impossible," said I, laying down the letter on the table, and staring over at D'Ervan.

“No more so, dear friend, than what you have done for me this evening, and which, I need not tell you, involves no risk whatever. Here am I now, without pass or countersign, your guest—the partaker of as good a supper and as excellent a glass of wine as man need care for. In an hour hence—say two at most—I shall be on my way over to St. Cloud. Who is, then, I ask you, to be the wiser? You’ll not put me down in the night report—don’t start—I repeat it—you can’t do it; for I had no countersign to pass through: and as the Consul reads these sheets every morning, you are not going to lose your commission for the sake of an absurd punctilio that nobody on earth will thank you for. Come, come, my worthy lieutenant, these same excellent scruples of yours savour far more of the scholar at the rigid old Polytechnique than the young officer of hussars. Help me to that ortolan there, and pass the bottle. There—a bumper of such a vintage is a good reward for so much talking.”

While the abbé continued to exert himself by many a flippant remark, and many a smart anecdote, to dissipate the gloom that now fell over my spirits, I grew only more and more silent. The one false step I had taken already presented itself before me as the precedent for further wrong, and I knew not what course to take, nor how to escape from my dilemma.

“I say, lieutenant,” said D’Ervan, after a pause of some minutes, during which he had never ceased to regard me with a fixed, steady stare, “you are about as unlike the usual character of your countrymen as one can well conceive.

“How so?” said I, half smiling at the remark.

“All the Irishmen I have ever seen,” replied he—“and I have known some scores of them—were bold, dashing, intrepid fellows, that cared nothing for an enterprise if danger had no share in it—who loved a difficulty as other men love safety—who had an instinct for where their own reckless courage would give them an advantage over all others, and took life easily, under the conviction that every day could present the circumstance where a ready wit and a stout heart could make the way to fortune. Such were the Irish I knew in the brigade; and though not a man of the number had ever seen what they called the Green

Island, they were as unlike the English, or French, or Germans, or any other people, as—as the old Court of Louis XIV. was unlike the guard-room style of reception that goes on now-a-days yonder."

"What you say may be just," said I coolly; "and if I seem to have few features of that headlong spirit which is the gift of my nation, the circumstances of my boyhood could well explain, perhaps excuse them. From my earliest years I have had to struggle against ills that many men, in a long lifetime, do not meet with. If suspicion and distrust have crept or stolen into my heart, it is from watching the conduct of those I deemed high-spirited and honourable, and seeing them weak, and vacillating, and faithless. And lastly, if every early hope that stirred my heart does but wane and pale within me, as stars go out when day is near, you cannot wonder that I, who stand alone here, without home or friend, should feel a throb of fear at aught which may tarnish a name that has yet no memory of past services to rely upon. And if you knew how sorely such emotions war against the spirit that lives here, believe me, you had never made the reproach—my punishment is enough already."

"Forgive me, my dear boy, if I said anything that could wound you for a moment," said the abbé. This costume of mine, they say, gives a woman's privilege, and truly I believe it does something of the sex's impertinence also. I ought to have known you better, and I do know you better by this time. And now let me press a request I made some half an hour ago—tell me this same story of yours. I long to learn something of the little boy where I feel such affection for the man."

The look of kindness and the tone of soothing interest that accompanied these words I could not resist; so, drawing my chair close towards him, I began the narrative of my life. He listened with the most eager attention to my account of the political condition of Ireland, questioned me closely as to my connection with the intrigues of the period; and when I mentioned the name of Charles de Meudon, a livid paleness overspread his features as he asked, in a low, hollow tone, if I were with him when he died?

"Yes," replied I, "by his bedside."

“Did he ever speak to you of me? Did he ever tell you much of his early life when in Provence?”

“Yes, yes; he spoke often of those happy days in the old château, where his sister, on whom he doted to distraction, was his companion. Hers was a sad story, too. Strange, is it not, I have never heard of her since I came to France?”

A long pause followed these words, and the abbé leaned his head upon his hand, and seemed to be lost in thought.

“She was in love with her cousin,” I continued, “and Charles, unhappily, refused his consent. Unhappily, I say, for he wept over his conduct on his death-bed.”

“Did he?” cried the abbé, with a start, while his eye flashed fire, and his nostrils swelled and dilated like a chafed horse. “Did he do this?”

“Yes, bitterly he repented it; and although he never confessed it, I could see that he had been deceived by others, and turned from his own high-souled purpose respecting his sister. I wonder what became of Claude—he entered the Church.”

“Ay, and lies there now,” replied the abbé, sternly.

“Poor fellow! is he dead, too? and so young.”

“Yes. He contrived to entangle himself in some Jacobite plot.”

“Why, he was a royalist.”

“So he was. It might have been another conspiracy, then—some *chouan* intrigue. Whatever it was, the Government heard of it; he was arrested at the door of his own *presbytère*; the grenadiers were drawn up in his own garden, and he was tried, condemned, and shot in less than an hour. The officer of the company ate the dinner that was preparing for him.”

“What a destiny! And Marie de Meudon?”

“Hush! the name is proscribed. The De Meudons professed strong royalist opinions, and Bonaparte would not permit her bearing her family name. She is known by that of her mother’s family, except by those poor minions of the Court who endeavour, with their *fade* affectation, to revive the graceful pleasantries of Marie Antoinette’s time, and they call her La Rose de Provence.”

“La Rose de Provence,” cried I, springing up from my chair, “the sister of Charles!” while a thrill of ecstasy

ran through my frame, followed the moment after by a cold, faint feel; and I sank almost breathless in the chair.

"Ha!" cried the abbé, leaning over me, and holding the lamp close to my face, "what——" And then, as he resumed his place, he slowly muttered between his teeth, "I did not dream of this."

Not a word was now spoken by either. The abbé sat mute and motionless, his eyes bent upon the floor, and his hands clasped before him. As for me, every emotion of hope and fear, joy and sorrow, succeeded each other in my mind; and it was only as I thought of De Beauvais once more that a gloomy despair spread itself before me, and I remembered that he loved her, and how the abbé hinted his passion was returned.

"The day is breaking," said D'Ervan, as he opened the shutter and looked out; "I must away. Well, I hope I may tell my poor friend De Beauvais that you'll not refuse his request. Charles de Meudon's sister may have a claim on your kindness too."

"If I thought that she——"

"You mean, that she loved him. You must take his word for that. She is not likely to make a confidant of you; besides, he tells you it's a last meeting. You can scarcely say nay. Poor girl, he is the only one remaining to her of all her house! On his departure, you are not more a stranger here than is she in the land of her fathers."

"I'll do it, I'll do it!" cried I, passionately. "Let him meet me where he mentioned. I'll be there."

"That's as it should be," said the abbé, grasping my hand, and pressing it fervently; "but come, don't forget you must pass me through this same cordon of yours."

With a timid and shrinking heart I walked beside the abbé across the open terrace, towards the large gate, which with its bronzed and gilded tracery was already shining in the rich sunlight.

"A fine-looking fellow, that dragoon yonder; he's decorated, I see."

"Yes; an old hussar of the Garde."

"What's he called?"

"Pierre Dulong; a name well known in his troop."

"*Halte là!*" cried the soldier, as we approached.

"Your officer," said I.

“The word?”

“Arcole.”

“Pass, ‘Arcole,’ and good morrow.”

“Adieu, lieutenant—adieu, Pierre,” said the abbé, as he waved his hand and passed out.

I stood for a minute or two uncertain of purpose; why, I know not. The tone of the last few words seemed uttered in something like a sneer. “What folly, though!” said I to myself. “D’Ervan is a strange fellow, and it is his way.”

“We shall meet soon, abbé,” I cried out, as he was turning the corner of the park wall.

“Yes, yes, rely on it, we shall meet—and soon.”

He kept his word.



CHAPTER XXIX.

LA ROSE DE PROVENCE.

THE one thought that dwelt in my mind the entire day was, that Marie de Rochfort was Charles de Meudon's sister. The fact once known, seemed to explain that secret power she exercised over my hopes and longings. The spell her presence threw around ever as she passed me in the park; that strange influence with which the few words I had heard her speak still remained fast-rooted in my memory; all these did I attribute to the hold her name had taken of my heart, as I sat night after night listening to her brother's stories. And then, why had I not guessed it earlier?—why had I not perceived the striking resemblance which it now seemed impossible to overlook? The dark eye, beaming beneath a brow squarely chiselled like an antique cameo; the straight nose and short, up-turned lip, where a half-saucy look seemed struggling with a sweet smile; and then the voice—was it not his own rich, southern accent, tempered by her softer nature? Yes; I should have known her. In reflections like these I made my round of duty, my whole heart wrapped up in this discovery. I never thought of De Beauvais, or his letter. It seemed to me as though I had known her long and intimately; she was not the Rose de Provence of the Court—the admired of the Tuileries—the worshipped belle of Versailles—but Marie de Meudon, the sister of one who loved me as a brother.

There was a dark alley near the Trianon, that led along the side of a little lake, where rocks and creeping plants, rudely grouped together, gave a half-wild aspect to the scene. The tall beech and the drooping ash-trees that grew along the bank threw their shadows far across the still water; and here I had remarked that Mademoiselle de Meudon came frequently alone. It was a place, from its look of shade and gloom, little likely to attract the gay



The Rose of Provence.

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visitors of the Court, who better loved the smoothly-shaven grass of the Palace walks, or the broad terraces where bright fountains were plashing. Since I discovered that she avoided me when we met, I had never taken this path on my rounds, although leading directly to one of my outposts, but preferred rather a different and longer route. Now, however, I sought it eagerly, and, as I hurried on, I dreaded lest my unwonted haste might excite suspicion. I resolved to see and speak to her. It was her brother's wish that I should know her; and till now I felt as though my great object in coming to France was unobtained, if I knew not her whose name was hallowed in my memory. Poor Charles used to tell me she would be a sister to me. How my heart trembled at the thought! As I drew near I stopped to think how she might receive me; with what feelings hear me speak of one who was the cause of all her unhappiness. But then they said she loved De Beauvais. What! was poor Claude forgotten? Was all the love-dream of her first affection passed? My thoughts ran wild as different impulses struggled through them, and I could resolve on nothing. Before me, scarcely a dozen paces, and alone, she stood looking on the calm lake, where the light in golden and green patches played, as it struggled through the dense foliage. The clattering of my sabre startled her, and, without looking back, she dropped her veil, and moved slowly on.

"Mademoiselle de Meudon," said I, taking off my chako, and bowing deeply before her.

"What—how! Why this name, sir? Don't you know it's forbidden here?"

"I know it, madame; but it is by that name alone I dare to speak to you; it was by that I learned to know you—from one who loved you, and who did not reject my humble heart—one who, amid all the trials of hard fate, felt the hardest to be—the wrong he did his sister."

"Did you speak of my brother Charles?" said she, in a voice low and tremulous.

"I did, madame. The last message his lips ever uttered was given to me, and for you. Not until last night did I know that I was every hour of the day so near to one whose name was treasured in my heart."

"Oh! tell me of him—tell me of my dear Charles!"

cried she, as the tears ran fast down her pale cheeks. "Where was his death? Was it among strangers that he breathed his last? Was there one there who loved him?"

"There was—there was!" cried I, passionately, unable to say more.

"And where was that youth that loved him so tenderly? I heard of him as one who never left his side—tending him in sickness, and watching beside him in sorrow. Was he not there?"

"I was—I was. My hand held his. In my ear his last sigh was breathed."

"Oh! was it you indeed who were my brother's friend?" said she, seizing my hand, and pressing it to her lips. The hot tears dropped heavily on my wrist, and in my ecstasy I knew not where I was. "Oh!" cried she, passionately, "I did not think that in my loneliness such a happiness as this remained for me. I never dreamed to see and speak to one who knew and loved my own dear Charles—who could tell me of his solitary hours of exile; what hopes and fears stirred that proud heart of his; who could bring back to me in all their force again the bright hours of our happy youth, when we were all to each other; when our childhood knew no greater bliss than that we loved. Alas! alas! how short-lived was it all! He lies buried beyond the sea in the soil of the stranger, and I live on to mourn over the past, and shudder at the future. But come, let us sit down upon this bank. You must not leave me till I hear all about him. Where did you meet first?"

We sat down upon a grassy bench beside the stream, where I at once began the narrative of my first acquaintance with De Meudon. At first the rush of sensations that came crowding on me made me speak with difficulty and effort. The flutter of her dress as the soft wind waved it to and fro, the melody of her voice, and her full, languid eye, where sorrow and long-buried affection mingled their expression, sent thrilling through my heart thoughts that I dared not dwell upon. Gradually, as I proceeded, my mind recurred to my poor friend, and I warmed as I spoke of his heroic darings and his bold counsels. All his high-souled ardour, all the nobleness of his great

nature, his self-devotion, and his suffering, were again before me, mingled with those traits of womanly softness which only belong to those whose courage is almost fanaticism. How her dark eyes grew darker as she listened, and her parted lips and her fast-heaving bosom betrayed the agitation that she felt! And how that proud look melted into sorrow when I told of the day when his out-pouring heart recurred to home and her, the loved one of his boyhood!

Every walk in that old terraced garden, each grassy alley, and each shady seat, I knew as though I saw them. Although I did not mention Claude, nor even distinctly allude to the circumstances which led to their unhappiness, I could see that her cheek became paler and paler, and that, despite an effort to seem calm, the features moved with a slight jerking motion, her lip trembled convulsively, and, with a low, sad sigh she fell back fainting.

I sprang down the bank towards the lake, and in an instant dipped my chako in the water; and as I hastened back, she was sitting up, her eyes staring madly round her, her look wild almost to insanity, while her outstretched finger pointed to the copse of low beech near us.

"There, there! I saw him!" said she. "He was there now. Look! look!" Shocked at the terrified expression of her features, and alarmed lest my story had conjured up before her disordered imagination the image of her lost brother, I spoke to her in words of encouragement. "No, no," replied she to my words, "I saw *him*—I heard *his* voice, too. Let us leave this. Bring me to the Trianon; and——" The terrified and eager look she threw around at each word did not admit of longer parley, and I drew her arm within mine to lead her forward. "This is no fancy, as you deem it," said she, in a low and broken tone, to which an accent of bitterness lent a terrible power; "nor could the grave give up before me one so full of terror to my heart as him I saw there." Her head sank heavily as she uttered this; and, notwithstanding every effort I made, she spoke no more, nor would give me any answer to my questions regarding the cause of her fears. As we walked forward we heard the sound of voices, which she at once recognized as belonging to the

Court party, and pressing my hand slightly, she motioned me to leave her. I pressed the pale fingers to my lips, and darted away, my every thought bent on discovering the cause of her late fright. In an instant I was back beside the lake. I searched every copse and every brake. I wandered for hours through the dark woods, but nothing could I see. I stooped to examine the ground, but could not even detect the pressure of a footstep. The dried branches lay unbroken, and the leaves unpressed around; and I at last became convinced that an excited brain, and a mind harassed by a long sorrow, had conjured up the image she spoke of. As I approached the picket, which was one of the most remote in my rounds, I resolved to ask the sentry had he seen any one.

"Yes, lieutenant," said the soldier; "a man passed some short time ago in an undress uniform. He gave the word, and I let him proceed."

"Was he old or young?"

"Middle-aged, and of your height."

"Which way did he take?"

"He turned towards the left as he passed out; I lost sight of him then."

I hurried immediately onward, and entered the wood by the path in the direction mentioned, my mind painfully excited by what I heard, and resolved to do everything to probe this matter to the bottom; but, though I walked miles in every direction, I met none save a few fagot-gatherers, and they had not seen any one like him I sought for. With a weary and a heavy heart I turned towards my quarters, all the happiness of the morning dashed by the strange event I have related. My night was feverish and disturbed; for a long time I could not sleep, and, when I did, wild and terrible fancies came on me, and I started up in terror. A horrible face recurred at every instant to my mind's eye; and even when awake, the least noise, the slightest rustling of the leaves in the park, agitated and excited me. At last, worn out with the painful struggle between sleep and waking, I arose and dressed. The day was breaking, and already the birds were carolling to the rising sun. I strolled out into the park. The fresh and bracing air of morning cooled my burning brow; the mild influences of the hour, when sweet perfumes float

softly in the dew-loaded breeze, soothed and calmed me; and I wandered back in thought to her who already had given a charm to my existence I never knew before.

The long wished-for dream of my boyhood was realized at last. I knew the sister of my friend. I sat beside her, and heard her speak to me in tones so like his own. I was no longer the friendless alien, without one to care for, one to feel interested in his fortunes. The isolation that pressed so painfully on me fled before that thought, and now I felt raised in my own esteem by those dark eyes that thanked me as I spoke of poor Charles. What a thrill that look sent through my heart! Oh, did she know the power of that glance! Could she foresee what seeds of high ambition her every smile was sowing! The round of my duty was to me devoid of all fatigue, and I returned to my quarters with a light step and a lighter heart.

The entire day I lingered about the Trianon and near the lake, but Marie never came, nor did she appear in the walks at all. "Was she ill? had the vision, whatever it was, of yesterday, preyed upon her health?" were my first thoughts, and I inquired eagerly if any doctor had been seen about the château; but no, nothing unusual seemed to have occurred, and a ball was to take place that very evening. I would have given worlds, were they mine, even to know in what part of the Palace she was lodged; and fifty times did I affect to have some duty, as an excuse to cross the terrace, and steal a cautious glance towards the windows, but in vain.

So engrossed was my mind with thoughts of her that I forgot all else. The pickets, too, I had not visited since daybreak, and my report to the minister remained unfilled. It was late in the evening when I sallied forth to my duty, and night, with scarce a star, was falling fast. My pre-occupation prevented my feeling the way as I walked along; and I had already visited all the outposts except one, when a low, faint whistle, that seemed to issue from the copse near me, startled me. It was repeated after a moment, and I called out,—

"Who's there? Advance."

"Ah, I thought it was you, Burke," said a voice I at once knew to be Beauvais's. "You broke faith with me at the town-gate yonder, and so I had to come down here."

"How? You surely were not there when I passed?"

"Yes, but I was, though. Did you not see the wood-cutter, with his blouse on his arm, lighting his pipe at the door of the guard-house?"

"Yes; but you can't mean that it was you."

"Do you remember his saying, 'Buy a cheap *charretée* of wood, lieutenant—I'll leave it at your quarters?'"

"De Beauvais," said I, gravely, "these risks may be fatal to us both. My orders are positive, and if I disobey them there are no powerful friends nor high relatives to screen me from a deserving punishment."

"What folly you speak, Burke! If I did not know you better, I should say you grudged me the hospitality I have myself asked you for. One night to rest—and I need it much, if you knew but all—and one day to speak to Marie, and you have done with me. Is that too much?"

"No—not if I did not betray a trust in sheltering you, far too little to speak of, much less thank me for; but——"

"Do spare me these scruples, and let us take the shortest way to your quarters; a supper, and three chairs to sleep on, are worth all your arguments, eloquent though they be."

We walked on together, almost in silence; I overwhelmed with fear for the result should my conduct ever become known, he evidently chagrined at my reception of him, and little disposed to make allowances for scruples he would not have respected himself.

"So here we are at last," said he, as he threw himself on my little sofa, seemingly worn out with exhaustion. I had now time to look at him by the light, and almost started back at the spectacle that presented itself. His dress, which was that of the meanest peasant, was ragged and torn; his shoes scarce held together with coarse thongs, and his beard, unshaven for weeks past, increased the haggard look of features where actual want and starvation seemed impressed. "You are surprised at my costume," said he, with a sad smile; "and, certes, Crillac would not court a customer habited as I am just now; but what will you say when I assure you that the outward man—and you will not accuse him of any voluptuous extravagance—has a very great advantage over the inner one? In plain

words, lieutenant, you'd hurry your cook, if you knew I have not tasted food, save what the hedges afford, for two days; not from poverty neither; there's wherewithal there to dine, even at Beauvilliers's." He rattled a well-filled purse as he spoke.

"Come, come, De Beauvais, you accuse me of doing the honours with a bad grace, and, in truth, I wish I were your host outside the pickets; but let me retrieve my character a little—taste this capon."

"If you never dined with a wolf, you shall now," said he, drawing his chair to the table and filling a large goblet with Burgundy. For ten or fifteen minutes he ate on like a man whom long starvation had rendered half savage; then ceasing suddenly, he looked up, and said, "Lieutenant, the cuisine here might tempt a more fastidious man than I am; and if these people are not hospitable enough to invite you to their soirées, they certainly do not starve you at home."

"How knew you that I was not asked to the château?" said I, reddening with a sense of offended pride I could not conceal.

"Know it? Why, man, these things are known at once; people talk of them in saloons and morning visits, and comment on them in promenades; and though I seem not to have been keeping company with the *beau monde* latterly, I hear what goes on there too. But trust me, boy, if your favour stands not high with the Court of to-day, you may perhaps be preparing the road to fortune with that of to-morrow."

"Though you speak in riddle, De Beauvais, so long as I suspect that what you mean would offer insult to those I serve, let me say—and I say it in all temper, but in all firmness—you'll find no ready listener in me. The highest favour I aspire to is the praise of our great chief, General Bonaparte, and here I pledge his health."

"I'll drink no more wine to-night," said he, sulkily pushing his glass before him. "Is this to be my bed?"

"Of course not; mine is ready for you. I'll rest on the sofa there; for I shall have to visit my pickets by day-break."

"In Heaven's name, for what?" said he, with a half

sneer. "What can that poor Savary be dreaming of? Is there any one about to steal the staircase of the Louvre, or the clock from the pavilion of the Tuileries? or is it the savants of the Institute he's afraid of losing?"

"Rail on, my good friend; you'll find it very hard to make an old scholar of the Polytechnique think poorly of the man that gains battles."

"Well, well, I give up my faith in physiognomy. Do you remember that same evening in the Tuileries, when I asked your pardon, and begged to be your friend? I thought you a different fellow then from what I see you now; that silly hussar pelisse has turned many a head before yours."

"You wish to make me angry, De Beauvais, and you'll not succeed. A night's rest will bring you to better temper with all the world."

"Will it, faith! In that case a tolerably large portion of it must take leave of it before morning; for I promise you, my worthy hussar, there are some I don't expect to feel so very charitably towards as you expect."

"Well, well—what say you to bed?"

"I'll sleep where I am," said he, with some harshness in his tone. "Good night." The words were scarcely uttered when he turned on his side, and, shading his eyes from the light with his hand, fell fast asleep.

It was already past midnight, and as I was fatigued with my day's walking, I soon retired to my bed, but not to rest. Whenever I closed my eyes, Beauvais's pale and worn face seemed before me—the haggard expression of suffering and privation; and then I fell to thinking what enterprise of danger could involve him in such necessities as these. It must be one of peril, or he had not become what now I saw him. His very voice was changed—its clear, manly tone was now harsh and dissonant; his frank and cheerful look was downcast and suspicious.

At last, worn out with thinking, I fell asleep, but was suddenly awakened by a voice shouting from the outer room. I sat up and listened. It was De Beauvais, calling wildly for help; the cry grew fainter, and soon sank into the long-drawn respiration of repose. Poor fellow! even in his dreams his thoughts were of strife and danger.

CHAPTER XXX.

A "WARNING.

THE day was breaking when I was up and stirring, resolving to visit the pickets before De Beauvais awoke, for even still the tone of ridicule he assumed was strong before me. I passed stealthily through the room where he was still sleeping: the faint light streamed through the half-closed shutters, and fell upon a face so pale, so haggard, and so worn, that I started back in horror. How altered was he, indeed, from what I had seen him first! The cheek once ruddy with the flush of youth was now pinched and drawn in; the very lips were bloodless, as if not illness alone, but long fasting from food, had pressed upon him. His hair, too, which used to fall upon his shoulders and on his neck in rich and perfumed locks, silky and delicate as a girl's, was now tangled and matted, and hung across his face and temples wild and straggling. Even to his hands his changed condition was apparent; for they were torn and bleeding: while in the attitude of sleep, you could trace the heavy unconscious slumber of one utterly worn out and exhausted. His dress was of the coarse stuff the peasants wear in their blouses, and even that seemed old and worn. What strange career had brought him down to this I could not think; for poor as all seemed about him, his well-stocked purse showed that his costume was worn rather for disguise than necessity. Such was my first thought; my second, more painful still, recurred to her he loved, by whom he was, perhaps, beloved in turn. Oh! if anything can add to the bitter smart of jealousy, it is the dreadful conviction that she for whom our heart's best blood would flow to ensure one hour of happiness, has placed her whole life's fortune on the veriest chance, bestowing her love on one whose life gives no guarantee for the future—no hope, no pledge, that the world's wildest schemes of daring and ambition are not dearer to

his eyes than all her charms and affections. How does our own deep devotion come up before us contrasted with this ; and how, in the consciousness of higher motives and more ennobling thoughts, do we still feel inferior to him who, if poor in all besides, is rich in her love. Such envious feelings filled my heart, as I looked on him ; and with slow, sad step I moved on, when by accident I came against a chair, and threw it down. The noise awoke him, and with a spring he was on his legs, and, drawing a pistol from his bosom, cried out,—

“Ha!—what is't? Why Burke, it's you! What hour is it?”

“Not four yet. I'm sorry to have disturbed you, De Beauvais ; but the chair here——”

“Yes, yes, I placed it so last night. I felt so very heavy that I could not trust myself with waking to a slight noise. Where to, so early? Ah! these pickets—I forgot.” And with that he lay down again, and before I left the house was fast asleep once more.

Some trifling details of duty detained me at one or two of the outposts, and it was beyond my usual time when I turned homeward. I had but just reached the broad alley that leads to the foot of the great terrace, when I saw a figure before me hastening on towards the château. The flutter of the dress showed it to be a woman, and then the thought flashed on me—it was Mademoiselle de Meudon. Yes, it was her step—I knew it well. She had left the place thus early to meet De Beauvais. Without well knowing what I did, I had increased my speed, and was now rapidly overtaking her, when the noise of my footsteps on the ground made her turn about and look back. I stopped short suddenly. An indistinct sense of something culpable on my part, in thus pursuing her, flitted across my mind, and I could not move. There she stood, too, motionless ; but for a second or two only, and then beckoned to me with her hand. I could scarcely trust my eyes, nor did I dare to stir till she had repeated the motion twice or thrice.

As I drew near, I remarked that her eyes were red with weeping, and her face pale as death. For a moment she gazed steadfastly at me, and then, with a voice whose accent I can never forget, she said,—

"And you, too, the dearest friend of my own Charles, whose very death-bed spoke of loyalty to him, how have you been drawn from your allegiance?"

I stood amazed and astounded, unable to utter a word in reply, when she resumed,—

"For them there is reason, too. They lived, or their fathers did, in the sunshine of the old Monarchy. Wealth, rank, riches, power—all were theirs: but you, who came amongst us with high hopes of greatness, where others have earned them on the field of battle—whose youth is a guarantee that base and unworthy thoughts should form no part of his motives, and whose high career began under the very eyes of him, the idol of every soldier's heart—oh! why turn from such a path as this, to dark and crooked ways, where low intrigue, and plot, and treachery are better weapons than your own stout heart and your own bright sword?"

"Hear me, I pray you," said I, bursting into impatience—"hear me but one word, and know that you accuse me wrongfully. I have no part in, nor have I knowledge of, any treason."

"Oh, speak not thus to me. There are those who may call their acts by high-sounding titles, and say—'We are but restoring our own sovereigns to the land they owned;' but you are free to think and feel. No prestige of long years blinds your reason, or obstructs your sense of right."

"Once more I swear, that though I can but guess at where your suspicions point, my faith is now as true, my loyalty as firm, as when I pledged myself at your dear brother's side to be a soldier."

"Then why have you mixed yourself with their intrigues? Why are you already suspected? Why has Madame Bonaparte received orders to omit your name in all the invitations to the château?"

"Alas! I know not. I learn now, for the first time, that suspicion ever attached to me."

"It is said, too—for already such things are spoken of—that you know that dreadful man, whose very presence is contamination. Oh! does it not seem like fate, that his dark path should traverse every portion of my destiny?"

The sobs that burst from her at these words seemed to rend her very bosom.

"They say," continued she, while her voice trembled with strong emotion—"they say he has been here."

"I know not of whom you speak," said I, as a cold chill ran through my blood.

"Mehée de la Touche," replied she, with an effort.

"I never heard of him till now—the very name is unknown to me."

"Thank God for this," muttered she between her teeth. "I thought, perhaps, that De Beauvais had made you known to each other."

"No; De Beauvais never introduced me, save to some friends of his one evening at a supper, several months back; and only one of them have I ever seen since, an Aubé d'Ervan; and, indeed, if I am guilty of any breach of duty, I did not think the reproach was to come from you."

The bitterness of these last words was wrung from me in a moment of wounded pride.

"How! what mean you?" said she impetuously. "No one has dared to call my fidelity into question, nor speak of me as false to those who cherish and protect me."

"You mistake my meaning," said I, sadly and slowly; then hesitating how far I should dare allude to De Beauvais's affection, I stopped, when suddenly her face became deeply flushed, and a tear started to her eye. "Alas! she loves him," said I to my heart, and a sickness like death passed over me.

"Leave me, leave me quickly," cried she. "I see persons watching us from the terrace." And with that she moved hastily on towards the château, and I turned into one of the narrow walks that led into the wood.

Two trains of thought struggled for mastery in my mind: how had I become suspected? how should I wipe out the stain upon my honour?

There was not an incident of my life since my landing in France I did not call to mind; and yet, save in the unhappy meeting with De Beauvais, I could not see the slightest probability that even malevolence could attach anything to my reputation. From D'Ervan, it is true, I heard more than once opinions that startled me; less,

however, by anything direct in their meaning, than that they were totally new and strange; and yet the abbé, I had every reason to believe, was a friend of the present Government—at least it was evident he was on terms of close intimacy with Monsieur Savary.

"De Beauvais must clear up some of these doubts for me," thought I; "he must inform me more particularly as to those to whom he introduced me. I shall endeavour to learn, too, something of their schemes, and thus guard myself against the mere chance of suspicion, for unquestionably he is not in ignorance of the movement, whatever it be." And with such intentions I hurried onwards, eager to reach my quarters.

As I entered my room, a low, heavy sob broke on my ear; I started back with surprise. It was De Beauvais, who sat, his head buried in his hands, leaning on the table.

"Ha!" said he, springing up, and passing his hand hurriedly across his eyes, "so soon back! I scarcely expected you."

"It is past ten o'clock—a full hour later than my usual return."

"Indeed!" rejoined he, with an air of impertinent surprise. "So then your pickets have been arresting and detaining some poor devils gathering fagots or acorns; or have you unfathomed the depth of this terrible plot your Préfet de Police has become insane about?"

"Neither," said I, affecting a careless tone. "The Government of the Consul is sufficiently strong to make men's minds easy on that score. Whatever intrigues are at work, they are as little likely to escape his keen eye as their perpetrators are, when taken, the fire of a grenadier company."

"*Ma foi*, sir, you speak confidently," replied he, in an accent of pride totally different from his former tone. "And yet I have heard of persons just as confident, too, who afterwards confessed they had been mistaken. But, perhaps, it seems less strange to you that a sous-lieutenant of artillery should rule the destinies of France, than that the king of the country should resume the throne of his ancestors."

"Take care, De Beauvais, with whom you speak. I

warn you ; and be assured I'll not be trifled with. One word more, and I put you under arrest."

"Not here, surely," replied he, in a low and searching voice. "Not here. Let us walk out into the park—let it be in the great alley, or on the terrace yonder ; or, better still, let the capture take place in the wood ; but do not let your loyalty violate the hospitality of your home."

"Forgive me, I pray ; I knew not what I said. You tempted me sorely, though. Think but for a moment, De Beauvais, how I stand here, and let your own heart judge me. I am an alien—a friendless stranger. There lives not one in all the length and breadth of France who would raise a finger, or speak one word to save me were my head in peril. My sword and my fidelity are all my hope ; that both should remain pure and unblemished is all my wish. The grade I have I owe to him——"

"Great cause for gratitude, truly," he broke in. "The chief *élève* of the Polytechnique is made a sous-lieutenant of cavalry, with functions of a sergeant of the *gendarmerie*, with orders to stop all travellers, and search their pockets. Shame on it ! It was not thus the rightful sovereigns of France regarded those who wore their epaulettes—not thus did they esteem the soldier's part. Think, for a second, what you are, and then reflect what you might be. Cold and unimpassioned as you call yourself, I know your heart better. There lives not one who treasures a higher ambition in his breast than you. Ah ! your eyes sparkle already. Think, then, I say, what a career opens before you, if you have courage to embrace it. It's a great game that enables a man to spring from sous-lieutenant to colonel of a regiment. Come, Burke, I can have no reason, save your welfare, to press these considerations on you. What are you writing there ?"

"A report to the Préfet de Police. I see now, however late it is, the unworthiness of the part I've acted, in remaining in a service where I've listened to statements such as these. I shall ask to have my grade withdrawn, and be reduced to the ranks ; there, perhaps, I may be permitted to carry a soldier's musket without a stain upon my honour."

"You can do better, sir," interrupted he, as his face grew purple with passion, and his eyes flashed fire—"far

better: call up your dragoons yonder, and place me where you threatened, under arrest; forward your report to the minister, that Henri de Beauvais, Marquis et Pair de France, when such things were, has been taken with the 'Croix de St. Louis' and the cordon in his possession." Here he took from his bosom the decoration, and waved it above his head. "Add, too, that he came prepared to tempt your loyalty with this." He drew forth at the words a parchment document, and dashed it on the table before me.

"There, sir, read it; it is the king's own handwriting—your brevet of colonel to a regiment of the Gardes. Such proofs of your devotion can scarcely go unrewarded. They may raise you to the rank of police spy. There is a lady yonder, too, who should also share in your elevation, as she does in your loyal sentiments—Mademoiselle de Meudon may be too quick for you. Lose no time, sir; such chances as these are not the fruit of every day. After all, I can scarcely go to the guillotine under better auspices than with my cousin and my *friend* as my betrayers. Mayhap, too, they'll do you the honour to make you mount guard beside the scaffold. Such an occasion to display your devotion should not escape you. David found it profitable to catch the expiring agonies of his own friends, as with easel and brush he sat beside the guillotine. The hint should not be lost."

The insulting emphasis with which he spoke the last words cut me to the very heart, and I stood speechless before him, trembling like a criminal.

"Let us part, De Beauvais," said I, at length, as I held my hand towards him. "Let us say adieu to each other, and for ever. I can forgive all you have said to me far better than I could myself had I listened to your persuasions. What may be honourable and just in you would be black ingratitude and dark treachery in me. I shall now endeavour to forget we have ever met, and once more, good-bye!"

"You are right," replied he, after a pause of some seconds, and in a tone of great sadness. "We never should have met. Adieu!"

"One word more, De Beauvais. I find that I have been suspected of some treasonable intercourse, that even here I

am watched and spied upon ; tell me, I beseech you, before you go, from what quarter comes this danger, that I may guard against it."

"In good truth, you give me credit for quicker perceptions than I have any right to. How so loyal a gentleman should lie under such an imputation I cannot even guess."

"Your sneers shall not provoke me. The fact is as I state it ; and if you will not help me to the discovery, tell me, at least, who are the persons to whom you introduced me formerly at Beauvilliers's ?"

"Very excellent company ! I trust none of them have cheated you at *écarté*."

"Pray, have done with jesting, and answer me. Who is your *abbé* ?"

"*Ma foi*, he is the *Abbé d'Ervan*. What part of France he comes from—who are his family, friends, and resources—are all questions I have never thought proper to ask him, possibly because I am not so scrupulous on the score of my acquaintances as you are. He is a very clever, amusing, witty person—knows almost every one—has the *entrée* into every house in the *Faubourg St. Germain*—can compose a couplet, and sing it—make a mayonnaise or a madrigal better than any man I know—and, in fact, if he were one of these days to be a minister of France, I should not be so very much surprised as you appear this moment at my not knowing more about him. As to the other, the Russian secretary, or spy, if you like the phrase better, he was unlucky enough to have one of his couriers robbed by a party of brigands, which, scandal says, were sent out for the purpose by *Monsieur de Talleyrand*. His secret despatches were opened and read ; and as they were found to implicate the Russian Government in certain intrigues carrying on, the Czar had only one course open, which was to recall the sec., and disavow his whole proceedings. The better to evince his displeasure, I hear they have slit his nose, and sent him to pass the winter at *Tobolsk*. Lastly, the *préfet*—what shall I say of him, save that he was a *préfet* in the south, and wants to be one again ? His greatest endeavours in any cause will be to pledge its success in Burgundy, or, if you wish, drink the downfall of its enemy ; and as to his enthusiasm, he cares a devilish

deal more for a change of weather than a change of dynasty, particularly in the truffle season, or when the vines are ripening. Such are the truly dangerous associates you have kept company with. It now only remains to speak of my humble self, whose history, I need scarcely say, is far more at your service than worth the hearing. Are you satisfied?"

"Quite so, as regards me; by no means so, however, as to your fate. Short as our intimacy has been, I have seen enough of you to know that qualities like yours should not be wasted in a mad or hopeless enterprise."

"Who told you it was either?" interrupted he, impetuously. "Who dares to say that the rule of a usurper is more firmly placed than the prestige of a monarchy, that goes back to Hugues Capet? Come, come! I will not discuss these questions with you, nor have I temper now left to do so. Give me the countersign to pass the sentry, and let us part."

"Not in anger, though, De Beauvais."

"Not in friendship, sir," replied he, proudly, as he waved back, with his, my proffered hand. "Adieu!" said he, in a softened tone, as he moved from the room, and then, turning quickly round, he added, "We may meet again hereafter, and scarcely can do so on equal terms. If fortune stand by you I must be a beggar; should I win, yours is, indeed, a sorry lot. When that time comes, let him with whom the world goes best not forget the other. Good-bye!" And with that he turned away, and left the house.

I watched him as he strode along the silent alleys, careless and free as though he had no cause for fear, till he disappeared in the dark wood, and then I sat down at the door to think over our interview. Never had my heart felt more depressed. My own weakness in having ever admitted the intimacy of men whose dangerous designs were apparent had totally undermined the strong principle of rectitude I should have relied upon in such a trial, and on which I could have thrown myself for support. What had I to guide me after all, save my devotion to the cause of Bonaparte himself? The prejudices of education—the leanings of family opinion—the inclinations of friends—exist not for the alien. He has to

choose his allegiance—it is not born with him ; his loyalty is not the growth of a hundred different sympathies, that have twined round his heart in childhood, and grown with him to manhood, speaking of home and infancy—of his own native streams and mountains—of a land that was his father's. No! with him it is not a conviction—it is but a feeling. Such was the substance of my reverie ; and as I arose and strolled out into the park, it was with a deeply-uttered vow to be true to him and his fortunes whose name first lit the spark of ambition in my heart, and through weal or woe to devote myself to him.



CHAPTER XXXI.

THE "CHATEAU."

THE same day that De Beauvais left me, the Court took its departure from Versailles. A sudden resolution of the Consul to visit the camp at Boulogne, where he was to be accompanied by Madame Bonaparte, was announced as the reason for this change, while a dark rumour ran that some detected scheme for his assassination had induced his friends to advise this step. Certain it was, the preparations were made with the utmost speed, and in less than an hour after the despatch had arrived from Paris, the Court was on its way back to the capital.

It was not without a sense of sadness that I watched the equipages as they rolled one by one from beneath the deep colonnade, and traversed the wide terrace, to disappear in the recesses of the dark forest. I strained my eyes to catch even a passing look at one who to me had made every walk and every alley a thing to love. But I could not see her ; and the last roll of the retiring wheels

died away in the distance without one friendly voice to say adieu—one smile at parting.

Though I had not participated in the festivities of the château, nor even been noticed by any of the guests, the absence of its gay world, the glitter of its brilliant cortége, the neighing steeds in all their bright panoply, the clank of military music, the gorgeously-dressed ladies who strolled along its terraced walks, made the solitude that followed appear dark and desolate indeed; and now, as I walked the park, whose avenues at noonday were silent as at midnight, the desertion imparted a melancholy feeling to my heart I could not explain. How often had I stopped beneath that balcony, striving to distinguish the soft tones of one gentle voice amid the buzz of conversation! How had I watched the crowded promenade every evening upon the terrace, to see one figure there among the rest!—and when my eye had fallen upon her, how has it followed and traced her as she went! And now I frequented each spot where I had ever seen her, pacing at sunset the very walk she used to take, dwelling on each word she ever spoke to me. The château, too, of which before I had not passed the door, I now revisited again and again, lingering in each room where I thought she had been, and even resting on the chairs, and calling up before me her image as though present.

Thus passed over weeks and months. The summer glided into the mellow autumn, and the autumn itself grew cold and chill, with greyish skies and sighing winds that swept the leaves along the dark walks, and moaned sadly among the tall beech-trees. The still, calm waters of the little lake, that reflected the bright foliage and the deep-blue sky, motionless as in a mirror, was now ruffled by the passing breeze, and surged with a low, sad sound against its rocky sides; and as I watched these changes, I sorrowed less for the departing season, than that every trace of her I loved was fading from before me. The bare and skeleton branches now threw their gaunt shadows where I had seen her walk at noonday, enveloped in deep shade. Dark, watery clouds were hurrying across the surface of the stream where I had seen her fair form mirrored. The cold winds of coming winter swept along the princely terrace, where not a

zephyr rustled her dress as she moved; and somehow, I could not help connecting these changes with my own sensations, and feeling that a gloomy winter was approaching to my own most cherished hopes.

Months passed over with me thus, in which, save on my round of duty, I never spoke to any one. D'Ervan did not return as he promised—a circumstance which, with all my solitude, I sincerely rejoiced at—and of De Beauvais I heard nothing; and yet, on one account, I could have wished much to learn where he was. Unhappily, in the excitement of the morning I last saw him, he forgot on the table at my quarters the commission of colonel, by which he had endeavoured to tempt my ambition, and which I never noticed till several hours after his departure. Unwilling to destroy, and yet fearful of retaining it in my possession, I knew not well what to do, and had locked it up in my writing-desk, anxiously looking for an opportunity to forward it to him. None such, however, presented itself, nor did I ever hear from him from the hour he left me.

The unbroken solitude in which I lived disposed me to study, and I resumed the course which, in earlier days, had afforded me so much interest and amusement; and by this, not only was my mind drawn off from the contemplation of the painful circumstances of my own loneliness, but gradually my former ardour for military distinction came back in all its force; and thus did I learn, for the first time, how many of the griefs that our brains beget find their remedies in the source they spring from—the exercise of the intellect being like that of the body, an essential to a healthy state of thinking and feeling. Each day imparted fresh energy to me in the path I followed; and in these solitary hours I made those acquisitions in knowledge which, in after-life, were to render me the most important services, and prepare me for the contingencies of a soldier's career.

While thus engaged, time rolled over, and already the dark and gloomy month of January set in with clouded skies and nights of storm and rain. Everything wore its most cheerless aspect. Not only were the trees leafless and bare, the roads broken up and fissured with streams of water, but the neglected look of the château

itself bespoke the sad and gloomy season. The closed shutters, the closely-barred doors, the statues covered up with mats to protect them from the weather, the conservatories despoiled of all their gay habitants, betrayed that the time was passed when, in the warm air of sunset, happy groups wandered hither and thither, inhaling the rich odours of the flowers, and gazing on the brilliant landscape.

It was about nine o'clock at night. The storm that usually began each evening at the same hour was already stirring in fitful gusts among the bare branches of the trees, or sending a sudden splash of rain against the windows, when, as I drew closer to my fire, and was preparing to enjoy myself for the evening over my book, I heard the regular tramping sound of a cavalry horse approaching along the terrace—the jingle of the accoutrements was a noise I could not mistake. I arose, but before I reached the door I heard a deep voice call out,—

"The Sous-Lieutenant Burke—a despatch from Paris."

I took the paper, which was sealed and folded in the most formal manner, and returning to the room, opened it. The contents ran thus:—

"Sous-Lieutenant,—On receipt of this you are commanded to station four dragoons of your party, with a corporal, on the road leading from Chaillot to Versailles, who shall detain all persons passing that way, unable to account satisfactorily for their presence. You will also station a picket of two dragoons at the cross-road from the Tron to St. Cloud for the like purpose. The remainder of your party to be under arms during the night, and, if requisite, at the disposal of Captain Lepelletier. For the execution of which, the present order will be your responsibility.

"(Signed)

"SAVARY,

"Colonel de Gendarmerie d'Elite.

"Given at the Tuileries, January 14, 1804."

"So," thought I, "there is, then, something astir after all. These precautions all indicate minute and accurate

information; and now to perform my part." Just at that instant I perceived at my feet a small note, which apparently had fallen from the envelope as I opened it—I took it up. It was addressed—"Sous-Lieutenant Burke," with the words "in haste" written in the corner. Tearing it open at once, I read the following:—

"All is discovered—Pichegru arrested—Moreau at the Temple. A party have left this to capture the others at the Château d'Ancre; they cannot be there before midnight; you may then yet be in time to save H. de B., who is among them. Not an instant must be lost."

There was no signature to this strange epistle, but I knew at once from whom it came. Marie alone could venture on such a step to save her lover. My own determination was taken at once; should my head be on it, I'd do her bidding. While I sent for the sergeant to give him the orders of the colonel, I directed my servant to bring round my horse to the door as lightly equipped as possible, and, save the holsters, nothing of his usual accoutrements. Meanwhile I prepared myself for the road by loading my pistols and fastening on my sword; the commission, too, which De Beauvais had left behind, I did not forget, but taking it from my desk, I placed it safely in my bosom; nor was the brief billet omitted, which having read and re-read, I placed in the lining of my cap for safety. One difficulty still presented itself—where was the château, and how in the darkness of a winter's night should I find it. I just then remembered that my troop sergeant, a sharp, intelligent fellow, had been for some weeks past engaged in procuring forage about the neighbourhood for several miles round. I sent for him at once and asked him if he knew it.

"Yes, lieutenant, perfectly. It was an old seigneurie once; and though much dismantled, has a look of respectability still about it. I've often been there to buy corn; but the gruff old farmer, they say, hates the military, and it's not easy to get him to deal with us at all."

"What's the distance from here?"

"Two leagues and a half, almost three—indeed you may count it as much, the road is so bad."

"Now then for the way—describe it—be as brief as you can."

"You know the cross on the high road beyond Ypres?"

"I do. Proceed."

"Passing the cross and the little shrine, go forward for a mile or something more, till you come to a small cabaret on the roadside, at the end of which you'll find a '*chemin de traverse*,' a clay road, which will lead you up the fields about half a league, to a large pond, where they water the cattle; cross this and continue till you see the lights of a village to your left; the barking of the dogs will guide you if the lights be out; don't enter the village, but go on till you meet an old gateway covered with ivy, enter there, and you are in the avenue of the château; the high road is full five leagues about, but you'll easily find this way. There's a mastiff there you should be on your guard against, though you must not fire on him either; they were going to take my life once, that I half drew a pistol from my holster against him, and I heard one of the fellows say to another, that monseigneur's dog was well worth a '*bleu*' any day, whatever he meant by that."

Very few minutes sufficed to give my orders respecting the picket, and I was in my saddle and ready for the road; and although my departure excited no surprise among my men, coupled as it was with the orders I had just given, I overheard the troop sergeant mutter to another as I passed out—"Parbleu, I always suspected there was something wrong about that old château yonder—come what weather it would, they'd never let you take shelter within the walls of it."

The night was so dark, that when I turned into the road I could not even distinguish my horse's head; heavy drifts of rain, too, went sweeping along, and the wind roared through the forest with a noise like the sea in a storm.

I now put spurs to my horse, and the animal, fresh from long pampering, sprang forward madly, and dashed onward. The very beating of the rain, the adverse wind, seemed to chafe his spirits and excite his courage. With head bent down, and hands firmly grasping the reins. I rode on, till the faint glimmering of a light caught my eye at a distance. A few miles brought me beside it. It was a little candle that burned in the shrine above the

image of the Virgin. Some pious but humble hand had placed it there, regardless of the rain and storm; and there it was now burning secure from the rude assaults of the harsh night, and throwing its yellow light on the few sheap trinkets which village devotion had consecrated to the beloved saint. As I looked at the little altar, I thought of the perilous enterprise I was engaged in. I could have wished my heart to have yielded to the influence of a superstition, which for every moment of life seems to have its own apt consolation and succour. For, when as way-worn travellers refresh their parched lips at some roadside well, and bless the charity that carved the little basin in the rock—so, followers of this faith have ever and anon before their eyes some *material* evidence of their Church's benevolence—now arming them against the arrows of the world—now rendering them grateful for benefits received—now taxing their selfishness by sacrifices which elevate them in their own esteem—now comforting them by examples which make them proud of their afflictions. It is this direct appeal from the human heart to the hourly consolations of religion that forms the stronghold of belief in Catholic countries.

These thoughts were passing through my mind long after I left the little shrine behind me. "So," said I, "here must be the cabaret the sergeant spoke of," as I heard the sound of a voice issuing from a small house on the roadside. For a second or two I hesitated whether I should not dismount and ask the way; but a moment's consideration satisfied me it were better to risk nothing by delay; and, cautiously advancing, I heard by the sound of my horse's feet that we had left the high road, and were now on the clay path I looked for.

Again I dashed onward at a gallop, my powerful horse splashing through the deep ground, or striding boldly across the heavy furrows—now breasting some steep and rugged ascent, where the torn-up way gave passage to a swollen rivulet; now plunging down into some valley, where the darkness seemed thicker and more impenetrable still. At last I could see, far down beneath me, the twinkling light of the village, and began to deliberate with myself at what point I should turn off leftwards. Each moment the path seemed to lead me in the direction

of the light, while I felt that my road led straight onwards. I drew my rein to deliberate what course I should take, when directly in front of me I thought I could detect the clank of a sabre flapping against the flank of a horse. I lowered my head on a level with my horse's main, and could now distinctly hear the sound I suspected, and, more still, the deep tones of a soldier's voice interrogating some one, who, by the *patois* of his answer, I guessed to be a peasant.

"You are certain, then, we have not come wrong?" said the horseman.

"Ah! I know the way too well for that—travelling it daylight and dark since I was a boy. I was born in the village below. We shall soon reach the little wooden bridge, and then, turning to the left, beside Martin Guichard's——"

"What care I for all that?" interrupted the other, roughly. "How far are we now from the château? Is it still a league off?"

"*Parbleu!*—No! nor the half of it. When you rise the hill yonder, you'll see a light; they always have one burning in the tourelle there—and that's the château."

"Thank Heaven for that!" muttered I; "and now only let me pass them, and all is safe."

The figures before me, whom I could now dimly trace in the darkness, were descending step by step a rugged and narrow path, where a tall hedge formed a wall on either side. To get before them here, therefore, was out of the question; my only chance was by a *détour* through the fields to come down upon the village, and, if possible, gain the bridge he spoke of before them. Quick as the thought, I turned from the deep road to the still deeper earth of the ploughed field beside it. My horse—a strong and powerful Norman—needed but the slightest movement of the hand to plunge hotly on. My eyes bent upon the twinkle of the few lights that still marked the little hamlet, I rode fearlessly forward; now tearing madly through some low osier fence—now slipping in the wet and plashy soil, where each stride threatened to bring us both to the earth. The descent became soon almost precipitous; but the deep ground gave a footing, and I never slackened my speed. At length, with a crashing sound, I found that we

had burst the little enclosure of some village garden, and could dimly trace the outline of a cottage at some distance in front. Dismounting now, I felt my way cautiously for the path that usually conducts at the end of the cabin to the garden. This I soon made out, and the next minute was in the street. Happily, the storm, which raged still as violently as before, suffered no one to be without doors; and save the rare glimmer of a light, all was sunk in darkness.

I walked on beside my horse for some minutes, and at last I heard the rushing sound of a swollen river, as it tore along in its narrow bed; and approaching step by step discovered the little bridge, which simply consisted of two planks, unprotected by any railing at either side. With a little difficulty I succeeded in leading my horse across, and was just about to mount, when the sound of the trooper's voice from the village street again reached me.

A sudden thought flashed through my mind. Each moment might now be precious; and stooping down, I lifted the end of the plank, and sent it with a crash into the stream; the other soon followed it; and before I was in my saddle again the torrent was carrying them along amid the rocks of the stream.

"Here is a misfortune," cried the peasant, in a tone of misery; "the bridge has been carried away by the flood."

"*Tonnerre de ciel!* And is there no other way across?" said the dragoon, in a voice of passion.

I waited not to hear more, but giving the spur to my horse, dashed up the steep bank, and the next moment saw the light of the *château*, for such I guessed to be a bright star that twinkled at a distance. "Speed now will do it," said I, and put my strong Norman to his utmost. The wind tore past me scarce faster than I went, while the beating rain came round me. The footway soon altered, and I found that we were crossing a smooth turf like a lawn. "Ha! this is the old gate," thought I, as a tall archway, overhung with ivy and closed by a strong door, opposed farther progress. I beat loudly against it with the heavy handle of my whip, but to purpose; the hoarse voice of the storm drowned all such sounds. I dismounted and endeavoured to make myself heard by knocking with



The Chouans.



a large stone. I shouted, I cried aloud, but all in vain. My terror increased every instant. What was to be done? The dragoon might arrive at any moment, and then I myself must share the ruin of the others. Maddened by the emergency that each moment grew more pressing, I sprang into the saddle, and following the direction of the wall, rode round to the other side of the château, seeking some open spot, some break whereby to enter.

I had not gone far when I saw a portion of the wall which, broken and dilapidated, afforded the opportunity desired. I hesitated not, but dashed wildly at it. My horse, unaccustomed to such an effort, chested the barrier, and came rolling head foremost to the earth, throwing me several yards before him. A cry of pain escaped me as I fell; and I scarcely could gain my knees to rise, when the hoarse bay of a savage dog broke upon my ear, and I heard the animal tearing through the brushwood towards me. I drew my sabre in a trice, and scarce knowing at what side to defend myself, laid wildly about me, while I shouted with all my might for help. The furious beast sprang like a tiger at my throat, and, though wounded by a chance cut, seized me in his terrible fangs. Fortunately the strong collar of my uniform served to protect me; but the violence of the assault carried me off my balance, and we rolled one over the other to the ground. Grasping his throat with both hands I endeavoured to strangle him, while he vainly sought to reach my face. At this critical moment my cries were heard within, and numerous lights flitted up and down in front of the château, and a crowd of persons, all armed, were quickly about me. Seizing the dog by his collar, a peasant tore him away; while another, holding a lantern to my face, cried out in a voice of terror, "They are upon us! We are lost!"

"*Parbleu!* you should let Colbert finish his work—he is a 'blue:' they are but food for dogs any day."

"Not so," said another, in a low, determined voice; "this is a surer weapon."

I heard the cock of a pistol click as he spoke.

"Halt there!—Stop, I say!" cried a voice, in a tone of command. "I know him—I know him well. It's Burke. Is it not?"

It was De Beauvais spoke, while at the same moment he

knelt down beside me on the grass, and put his arm round my neck. I whispered one word into his ear. He sprang to his feet, and with a hasty direction to assist me towards the house, disappeared. Before I could reach the door he was again beside me.

"And you did this to save me, dear friend?" said he, in a voice half stifled with sobs. "You have run all this danger for my sake?"

I did not dare to take the merit of an act I had no claim to, still less to speak of her for whose sake I risked my life, and leaned on him without speaking, as he led me within the porch.

"Sit down here for a moment—but one moment," said he, in a whisper, "and I'll return to you."

I sat down upon a bench, and looked about me. The place had all the evidence of being one of consequence in former days: the walls, wainscoted in dark walnut wood, were adorned with grotesque carvings of hunting scenes and instruments of "venerie;" the ceiling in the same taste, displayed trophies of weapons, intermingled with different emblems of the *chasse*, while in the centre, and enclosed within a garter, were the royal arms of the Bourbons: the gilding that once shone on them was tarnished and faded; the *fleur-de-lis*, too, were broken and dilapidated, while but a stray letter of the proud motto remained, as if not willing to survive the downfall of those on whom it was now less a boast than a sarcasm. As I sat thus, the wide hall was gradually filled with men, whose anxious and excited faces betokened the fears my presence had excited, while not one ventured to speak or address a word to me. Most of them were armed with cutlasses, and some carried pistols in belts round their waists; while others had rude pikes, whose coarse fashion betokened the handiwork of a village smith. They stood in a semicircle round me; and while their eyes were riveted upon me with an expression of most piercing interest, not a syllable was spoken. Suddenly a door was opened at the end of a corridor, and De Beauvais called out,—

"This way, Burke—come this way!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

"THE CHATEAU D'ANCRE."

BEFORE I had time to collect myself I was hurried on by De Beauvais into a room, when, the moment I had entered, the door was closed and locked behind me. By the light of a coarse and rudely-formed chandelier that occupied the middle of a table, I saw a party of near a dozen persons who sat around it—the head of the board being filled by one whose singular appearance attracted all my attention. He was a man of enormous breadth of chest and shoulders, with a lofty massive head, on either side of which a quantity of red hair fell in profusion; a beard of the same colour descended far on his bosom, which, with his overhanging eyebrows, imparted a most savage and ferocious expression to features which of themselves were harsh and repulsive. Though he wore a blouse in peasant fashion, it was easy to see that he was not of the lower walk of society. Across his brawny chest a broad belt of black leather passed, to support a strong straight sword, the heavy hilt of which peeped above the arm of his chair. A pair of handsomely-mounted pistols lay before him on the table; and the carved handle of a poniard could be seen projecting slightly from the breast-pocket of his vest. Of the rest who were about him I had but time to perceive that they were peasants—but all were armed, and most of them wearing a knot of white ribbon at the breast of their blouses.

Every eye was turned towards me, as I stood at the foot of the table astonished and speechless—while De Beauvais, quitting my arm, hastened to the large man's side, and whispered some words in his ear. He rose slowly from his chair, and in a moment each face was turned to him. Speaking in a deep guttural tone, he addressed them for some minutes in a *patois* of which I was totally ignorant

—every word he uttered seemed to stir their very hearts, if I were to judge from the short and heavy respiration, the deep-drawn breath, the flushed faces and staring eyes around me. More than once some allusion seemed made to me—at least, they turned simultaneously to look at me; once, too, at something he said, each man carried his hand round to his sword-hilt, but dropped it again, listlessly, as he continued. The discourse over, the door was unlocked, and one by one they left the room, each man saluting the speaker with a reverence as he passed out. De Beauvais closed the door, and barred it, as the last man disappeared, and turning hastily round, called out,—

“What now?”

The large man bent his head down between his hands, and spoke not in reply; then suddenly springing up, he said,—

“Take my horse; he is fresh, and ready for the road, and make for Quillebœuf: the ford at Montgorge will be swollen—but he’ll take the stream for you;—at the farmer’s house, that looks over the river, you can stop.”

“I know it, I know it,” said De Beauvais; “but what of you, are you to remain behind?”

“I’ll go with him,” said he, pointing towards me. “As his companion, I can reach the Bois de Boulogne—in any case, as his prisoner—once there, you may trust me for the rest.”

De Beauvais looked at me for a reply. I hesitated what to say, and at last said, “For your sake, Henri de Beauvais, and yours only, have I ventured on a step which may, in all likelihood, be my ruin. I neither know, nor wish to know, your plans—nor will I associate myself with any one, be he who he may, in your enterprise.”

“Jacques Tisserand, the tanner,” continued the large man, as if not heeding nor caring for my interruption, “will warn Armand de Polignac of what has happened; and Charles de la Rivière had better remain near Biville for the English cutter—she’ll lie off the coast to-morrow or next day. Away—lose not a moment.”

“And my dear friend here,” said De Beauvais, turning to me, “who has risked his very life to rescue me, shall I leave him thus?”

“Can you save him by remaining?” said the other, as

he coolly examined the priming of his pistols. “We shall all escape, if you be but quick.”

A look from De Beauvais drew me towards him, when he threw his arms around my neck, and in a low, broken voice, muttered, “When I tell you that all I lived for exists to me no longer—the love I sought refused me—my dearest ambition thwarted—you will not think that a selfish desire for life prompts me now; but a solemn oath to obey the slightest command of that man, sworn before my sovereign, binds me, and I must not break it.”

“Away, away! I hear voices at the gate below,” cried the other.

“Adieu! adieu for ever,” said De Beauvais, as he kissed my cheek, and sprang through a small doorway in the wainscot, which closed after him as he went.

“Now for our movements,” said the large man, unhooking a cloak that hung against the wall. “You must tie my hands with this cord in such a way that, although seemingly secure, I can free myself at a moment; place me on a horse, a fast one too, beside you; and order your troopers to ride in front and rear of us. When we reach the Bois de Boulogne, leave the Allée des Chasseurs, and turn towards St. Cloud. *Tonnerre de ciel*, they’re firing yonder!” An irregular discharge of small-arms, followed by a wild cheer, rang out above the sound of the storm. “Again, did you hear that? there are the carbines of cavalry—I know their ring. Accursed dogs, that would not do my bidding,” cried he, stamping with passion on the ground, while, throwing off his blouse, he stuck his pistols in a belt around his waist, and prepared for mortal combat. Meanwhile, pistol-shots, mingled with savage shouts and wild hurrahs, were heard approaching nearer and nearer; and at length a loud knocking at the front door, with a cry of “They’re here—they’re here!”

The large man, now fully armed, and with his drawn sword in his hand, unlocked the door. The passage without was full of armed peasants, silent and watchful for his commands. A few words in the former *patois* seemed sufficient to convey them, and their answer was a cheer that made the walls ring.

The chief moved rapidly from place to place through the crowds, who, at his bidding, broke into parties: some

of them occupied doorways which enfiladed the hall—others knelt down to suffer some to fire above their heads; here were two posted, armed with hatchets, at the very entrance itself; and six of the most determined-looking were to dispute the passage with their muskets. Such was the disposition of the force, when suddenly the light was extinguished, and all left in utter darkness—the deep breathing of their anxious breasts alone marked their presence—when, without doors, the sounds of strife gradually died away, and the storm alone was heard.

As for me, I leaned against a doorway, my arms folded on my bosom, my head sunk, while I prayed for death, the only exit I could see to my dishonour.

There was a terrible pause—the very hurricane seemed to abate its violence, and only the heavy rain was heard as it fell in torrents—when, with a loud crash, the door in front was burst open, and fell with a bang upon the floor—not a word from those within, not a motion betrayed their presence, while the whispered tones of a party without showed that the enemy was there. "Bring up the torches quickly here," called out a voice like that of an officer; and as he spoke the red flare of lighted pine branches was seen moving through the misty atmosphere. The light fell upon a strong party of dismounted dragoons and gendarmerie, who, carbine in hand, stood waiting for the word to dash forward. The officer, whose figure I could distinguish as he moved along the front of his men, appeared to hesitate, and for a few seconds all stood motionless. At length, as if having resolved on his plan, he approached the doorway, a pine torch in his hand—another step, and the light must have disclosed the dense array of armed peasants that stood and knelt around the hall—when a deep low voice within uttered the one word, "Now!" and quick, as if by his breath the powder had been ignited, a volley rang out, pattering like hail on the steel breastplates, and through the branches of the trees; a mingled shout of rage and agony rose from those without, and, without waiting for a command, they rushed onward. The peasants, who had not time to reload their pieces, clubbed them in their strong hands, and laid wildly about them. The fight was now hand to hand; for, narrow as was the doorway, some three or four dragoons pressed

every moment in, and gradually the hall became a dense mass of indiscriminate combatants. The large man fought like one possessed, and cleft his way towards the entrance with a long straight dagger, as if regardless of friends or foes. “*A moi ! à moi !*” cried a tall and powerful man, as he sprang at his throat ; “ this is he.” The words were his last, as, stabbed to the very heart, he sprang backward in his death-agony ; but at the moment a perfect shower of bullets rattled around the large man, one of which alone took effect in his shoulder. Still he strove onwards, and at last, with a spring like a savage tiger, he lowered his head, and bounded clean out into the court. Scarcely, however, had his foot touched the wet grass, when he slipped forward, and fell heavily on his back. A dozen swords flashed above him as he lay, and only by the most immense efforts of the officer was he spared death in a hundred wounds. The defeat of their leader seemed to subdue all the daring courage of his party ; the few who were able to escape dashed hither and thither, through passages and doorways they were well acquainted with ; while the flagged floor was bathed in blood from the rest, as they lay in mangled and frightful forms, dead and dying on every side.

Like one in some dreadful dream, I stood spectator of this savage strife, wishing that some stray bullet had found my heart, yet ashamed to die with such a stain upon my honour. I crossed my arms before my breast, and waited for my doom. Two gendarmes passed quickly to and fro with torches, examining the faces and looks of those who were still likely to live, when suddenly one of them cried out, as he stood before me,—

“ What’s this ? An officer of hussars here ! ”

The exclamation brought an officer to the spot, who, holding a lantern to my face, said quickly,—

“ How is this, sir ?—how came you here ? ”

“ Here is my sword, sir,” said I, drawing it from the scabbard. “ I place myself under arrest. In another place, and to other judges, I must explain my conduct.”

“ *Parbleu !* Jacques,” said the officer, addressing another who sat, while his wounds were being bound up, on a chair near, “ this affair is worse than we thought of. Here’s one of the *huitième* in the thick of it.”

"I hope, sir," said I, addressing the young man, whose arm was bleeding profusely from a sabre wound—"I hope, sir, your wound may not be of consequence."

He looked up suddenly, and, while a smile of the most insulting sarcasm curled his bloodless lip, answered,—

"I thank you, sir, for your sympathy; but you must forgive me if, one of these days, I cannot bandy consolations with you."

"You are right, lieutenant," said a dragoon, who lay bleeding from a dreadful cut in the forehead. "I'd not exchange places with him myself this minute for all his epaulettes."

With an overwhelming sense of my own degraded position, when to such taunts as these I dared not reply, I stood mute and confounded. Meantime the soldiers were engaged in collecting together the scattered weapons, fastening the wrists of the prisoners with cords, and ransacking the house for such proofs of the conspiracy as might criminate others at a distance. By the time these operations were concluded, the day began to break, and I could distinguish in the courtyard several large covered carts or *charrettes* destined to convey the prisoners. One of these was given up entirely to the chief, who, although only slightly wounded, would never assist himself in the least, but lay a heavy, inert mass, suffering the others to lift him and place him in the cart. Such as were too badly wounded to be moved were placed in a room in the *château*, a guard being left over them.

A sergeant of the *gendarmérie* now approached me as I stood, and commenced, without a word, to examine me for any papers or documents that might be concealed about my person.

"You are in error," said I, quietly. "I have nothing of what you suspect."

"Do you call this nothing?" interrupted he, triumphantly, as he drew forth the parchment commission I had placed in my bosom, and forgot to restore to De Beauvais. "*Parbleu!* you'd have had a better memory had your plans succeeded."

"Give it here," said an officer, as he saw the sergeant devouring the document with his eyes. "Ah!" cried he, starting, "he was playing a high stake, too. Let him be closely secured."

While the orders of the officer were being followed up, the various prisoners were secured in the carts, mounted dragoons stationed at either side, their carbines held unslung in their hands. At last my turn came, and I was ordered to mount into a *charrette* with two gendarmes, whose orders respecting any effort at escape on my part were pretty clearly indicated by the position of two pistols carried at either side of me.

A day of heavy, unremitting rain, without any wind or storm, succeeded to the night of tempest. Dark inky clouds lay motionless near the earth, whose surface became blacker by the shadow. A weighty and louring atmosphere added to the gloom I felt; and neither in my heart within, nor in the world without, could I find one solitary consolation.

At first I dreaded lest my companions should address me—a single question would have wrung my very soul—but happily they maintained a rigid silence, nor did they even speak to each other during the entire journey. At noon we halted at a small roadside cabaret, where refreshments were provided, and relays of horses in waiting, and again set out on our way. The day was declining when we reached the Bois de Boulogne, and entered the long avenue that leads to the Barrière de l’Etoile. The heavy wheels moved noiselessly over the even turf; and, save the jingle of the troopers’ equipments, all was hushed. For above an hour we had proceeded thus, when a loud shout in front, followed by a pistol-shot, and then three or four others quickly after it, halted the party; and I could mark through the uncertain light the mounted figures dashing wildly here and there, and plunging into the thickest of the wood.

“Look to the prisoners,” cried an officer, as he galloped down the line; and, at the word, every man seized his carbine, and held himself on the alert. Meanwhile the whole cavalcade was halted, and I could see that something of consequence had occurred in front, though of what nature I could not even guess. At last a sergeant of the gendarmes rode up to our side splashed and heated.

“Has he escaped?” cried one of the men beside me.

“Yes!” said he, with an oath, “the brigand has got away, though how he cut the cords on his wrists, or by

what means he sprang from the *charrette* to the road, the devil must answer. Ha! there they are firing away after him. The only use of their powder is to show the fellow where they are."

"I would not change places with our captain this evening," cried one of the gendarmerie. "Returning to Paris without the red beard——"

"*Ma foi*, you're not wrong there. It will be a heavy reckoning for him with dark Savary; and as to taking a Breton in a wood——"

The word to march interrupted the colloquy, and again we moved forward.

By some strange sympathy I cannot account for, I felt glad that the chief had made his escape. The gallantry of his defence, the implicit obedience yielded him by the others, had succeeded in establishing an interest for him in my mind; and the very last act of daring courage by which he effected his liberty increased the feeling. By what an easy transition, too, do we come to feel for those whose fate has any similarity with our own! The very circumstance of common misfortune is a binding link; and thus I was not without an anxious hope that the chief might succeed in his escape, though, had I known his intrigue or his intentions, such interest had scarcely found a place in my heart.

Such reflections as these led me to think how great must be the charm to the human mind of overcoming difficulty or confronting danger, when even for those of whom we know nothing we can feel, and feel warmly, when they stand before us in such a light as this. Heroism and bravery appeal to every nature; and bad must be the cause in which they are exerted, before we can venture to think ill of those who possess them.

The lamps were beginning to be lighted as we reached the *Barrière*, and halted to permit the officer of the party to make his report of who we were. The formality soon finished, we defiled along the *Boulevard*, followed by a crowd that, increasing each moment, at last occupied the entire road, and made our progress slow and difficult. While the curiosity of the people to catch sight of the prisoners demanded all the vigilance of the guards to prevent it, a sad and most appalling stillness pervaded the

whole multitude, and I could hear a murmur as they went, that it was Generals Moreau and Pichegru who were taken. At length we halted, and I could see that the foremost *charrette* was entering a low archway, over which a massive portcullis hung. The gloomy shadow of a dark, vast mass, that rose against the inky sky, loomed above the wall, and, somehow, seemed to me as if well known.

“This is the ‘Temple’?” said I to the gendarme on my right.

A nod was the reply, and a half expressive look that seemed to say, “In that word you have said your destiny.”

About two years previous to the time I now speak of, I remember one evening, when returning from a solitary walk along the Boulevard, stopping in front of a tall and weather-beaten tower, the walls black with age, and pierced here and there with narrow windows, across which strong iron stanchions ran transversely. A gloomy fosse, crossed by a narrow drawbridge, surrounded the external wall of this dreary building, which needed no superstition to invest it with a character of crime and misfortune. This was the Temple; the ancient castle of the knights whose cruelties were written in the dark *oubliettes* and the noisome dungeons of that dread abode. A terrace ran along the tower on three sides. There, for hours long, walked in sadness and in sorrow the last of France’s kings, Louis XVI., his children at his side. In that dark turret the Dauphin suffered death. At the low casement yonder, Madame Royale sat hour by hour, the stone on which she leaned wet with her tears. The place was one of gloomy and sinister repute: the neighbourhood spoke of the heavy roll of carriages that passed the drawbridge at the dead of night, of strange sounds and cries, of secret executions, and even of tortures that were inflicted there. Of these dreadful missions a corps called the “Gendarmes d’élite” were vulgarly supposed the chosen executors, and their savage looks and repulsive exterior gave credibility to the surmise, while some affirmed that the Mameluke Guard the Consul had brought with him from Egypt had no other function than the murder of the prisoners confined there.

Little thought I then, that in a few brief months I should pass beneath that black portcullis a prisoner. Little

did I anticipate, as I wended my homeward way, my heart heavy and my step slow, that the day was to come when, in my own person, I was to feel the sorrows over which I then wept for others.



CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE "TEMPLE."

THIS was the second morning of my life which opened in the narrow cell of a prison; and when I awoke and looked upon the bare, bleak walls, the barred window, the strongly bolted door, I thought of the time when, as a boy, I slept within the walls of Newgate. The same sad sounds were now about me; the measured tread of sentinels; the tramp of patrols; the cavernous clank of door-closing, and the grating noise of locking and unlocking heavy gates, and then that dreary silence, more depressing than all, how they came back upon me now, seeming to wipe out all space, and bring me to the hours of my boyhood's trials. Yet what were they to this?—what were the dangers I then incurred to the inevitable ruin now before me? True, I knew neither the conspirators nor their crime; but who would believe it? How came I among them? Dare I tell it, and betray her whose honour was dearer to me than my life? Yet it was hard to face death in such a cause; no sense of high though unsuccessful daring to support me; no strongly-roused passion to warm my blood, and teach me bravely to endure a tarnished name. Disgrace and dishonour were all my portion—in that land, too, where I once hoped to win fame and glory, and make for myself a reputation among the first and greatest. The deep roll of a drum, followed by the harsh turning of keys in the locks along

the corridor, interrupted my sad musings; and the next minute my door was unbolted, and an official, dressed in the uniform of the prison, presented himself before me.

"Ah! monsieur, awake and dressed already!" said he, in a gay and smiling tone, for which the place had not prepared me. "At eight we breakfast here; at nine you are free to promenade in the garden or on the terrace—at least, all who are not *au secret*; and I have to felicitate monsieur on that pleasure."

"How, then; I am not a prisoner?"

"Yes, *parbleu!* you are a prisoner, but not under such heavy imputation as to be confined apart. All in this quarter enjoy a fair share of liberty: live together, walk, chat, read the papers, and have an easy time of it; but you shall judge for yourself. Come along with me."

In a strange state of mingled hope and fear I followed the gaoler along the corridor, and across a paved courtyard into a low hall, where basins and other requisites for a prison toilet were arranged around the walls. Passing through this, we ascended a narrow stair, and finally entered a large, well-lighted room, along which a table, plentifully but plainly provided, extended the entire length. The apartment was crowded with persons of every age, and apparently every condition, all conversing noisily and eagerly together, and evidencing as little seeming restraint as though within the walls of a café.

Seated at a table, I could not help feeling amused at the strange medley of rank and country about me. Here were old *militaires*, with bushy beards and moustaches, side by side with ruddy-faced peasants, whose long, yellow locks bespoke them of Norman blood; hard, weather-beaten sailors from the coast of Brétagne, talking familiarly with venerable seigneurs in all the pomp of powder and a queue; priests with shaven crowns; young fellows, whose easy looks of unabashed effrontery betrayed the careless Parisian; all were mingled up together, and yet not one among the number did I see whose appearance denoted sorrow for his condition or anxiety for his fate.

The various circumstances of their imprisonment, the imputation they lay under, the acts of which they were accused, formed the topics of conversation in common with the gossip of the town, the news of the theatres, and

the movements in political life. Never was there a society with less restraint; each man knew his neighbour's history too well to make concealment of any value, and frankness seemed the order of the day. While I was initiating myself into so much of the habit of the place, a large, flat, florid personage, who sat at the head of the table, called out to me for my name.

"The governor desires to have your name and rank for his list," said my neighbour at the right hand.

Having given the required information, I could not help expressing my surprise how, in the presence of the governor of the prison, they ventured to speak so freely.

"Ha," said the person I addressed, "he is not the governor of the Temple; that's merely a title we have given him among ourselves. The office is held always by the oldest *détenu*. Now, he has been here ten months, and succeeded to the throne about a fortnight since. The abbé yonder, with the silk scarf round his waist, will be his successor in a few days."

"Indeed! Then he will be at liberty so soon. I thought he seemed in excellent spirits."

"Not much, perhaps, on that score," replied he. "His sentence is hard labour for life at the Bagne de Toulon."

I started back with horror, and could not utter a word.

"The abbé," continued my informant, "would be right happy to take his sentence. But the governor is speaking to you."

"Monsieur le sous-lieutenant," said the governor, in a deep, solemn accent, "I have the honour to salute you, and bid you welcome to the Temple, in the name of my respectable and valued friends here about me. We rejoice to possess one of your cloth amongst us. The last was, if I remember aright, the Captain de Lorme, who boasted he could hit the Consul at sixty paces with a pistol-bullet."

"*Pardon*, governor," said a handsome man in a braided frock; "we had Ducaisne since."

"So we had, commandant," said the governor, bowing politely, "and a very pleasant fellow he was; but he only stopped one night here."

"A single night, I remember it well," grunted out a thick-lipped, rosy-faced little fellow, near the bottom of

the table. "You'll meet him soon, governor; he's at Toulon. Pray present my respects——"

"A fine! a fine!" shouted out a dozen voices in a breath.

"I deny it, I deny it," replied the rosy-faced man, rising from his chair. "I appeal to the governor if I am not innocent. I ask him if there were anything which could possibly offend his feelings in my allusion to Toulon, whither for the benefit of his precious health he is about to repair."

"Yes," replied the governor, solemnly, "you are fined three francs. I always preferred Brest; Toulon is not to my taste."

"Pay! pay!" cried out the others; while a pewter dish, on which some twenty pieces of money were lying, was passed down the table.

"And to resume," said the governor, turning towards me, "the secretary will wait on you after breakfast to receive the fees of initiation, and such information as you desire to afford him for your coming amongst us, both being perfectly discretionary with you. He who desires the privilege of our amicable reunion soon learns the conditions on which to obtain it. The enjoyments of our existence here are cheap at any price. Le Père d'Oignny, yonder, will tell you life is short—very few here are likely to dispute the assertion—and perhaps the Abbé Thomas may give you a strong hint how to make the best of it."

"*Parbleu*, governor! you forget the abbé left us this morning."

"True, true—how my memory is failing me—the dear abbé did leave us, sure enough."

"Where for?" said I, in a whisper.

"La Plaine de Grenelle," said the person beside me, in a low tone. "He was guillotined at five o'clock."

A sick shudder ran through me; and, though the governor continued his oration, I heard not a word he spoke, nor could I arouse myself from the stupor until the cheers of the party, at the conclusion of the harangue, awoke me.

"The morning looks fine enough for a walk," said the man beside me. "What say you to the gardens?"

I followed him without speaking across the court and down a flight of stone steps into a large open space, planted tastefully with trees, and adorned by a beautiful fountain. Various walks and alleys traversed the garden in every direction, along which parties were to be seen walking—some laughing, some reading aloud the morning papers—but all engaged, and, to all seeming, pleasantly. Yet did their reckless indifference to life, their horrible carelessness of each other's fate, seem to me far more dreadful than any expression of sorrow, however painful; and I shrank from them as though the contamination of their society might impart that terrible state of unfeeling apathy they were given up to. Even guilt itself had seemed less repulsive than this shocking and unnatural recklessness. Pondering thus, I hurried from the crowded path, and sought a lonely, unfrequented walk which led along the wall of the garden. I had not proceeded far, when the low but solemn notes of church music struck on my ear. I hastened forward, and soon perceived, through the branches of a beech hedge, a party of some sixteen or eighteen persons kneeling on the grass, their hands lifted as if in prayer, while they joined in a psalm tune—one of those simple but touching airs which the peasantry of the south are so attached to. Their oval faces bronzed with the sun, their long, flowing hair, divided on the head and falling loose on either shoulder, their dark eyes and long lashes, bespoke them all from that land of Bourbon loyalty, La Vendée, even had not their yellow jackets, covered with buttons along the sleeves, and their loose hose, evinced their nationality. Many of the countenances I now remembered to have seen the preceding night; but some were careworn and emaciated, as if from long imprisonment.

I cannot tell how the simple piety of these poor peasants touched me, contrasted, too, with the horrible indifference of the others. As I approached them, I was recognized; and, whether supposing that I was a well-wisher to their cause, or attracted merely by the tie of common misfortune, they saluted me respectfully, and seemed glad to see me. While two or three of those I had seen before moved forward to speak to me, I remarked that a low, swarthy man, with a scar across his upper lip, examined me with

marked attention, and then whispered something to the rest. At first he seemed to pay little respect to whatever they said—an incredulous shake of the head, or an impatient motion of the hand, replying to their observations. Gradually, however, he relaxed in this, and I could see that his stern features assumed a look of kinder meaning.

"So, friend," said he, holding out his tanned and powerful hand towards me, "it was thou saved our chief from being snared like a wolf in a trap. *Le bon Dieu* will remember the service hereafter; and the good king will not forget thee, if the time ever comes for his better fortune."

"You must not thank me," said I, smiling; "the service I rendered was one instigated by friendship only. I know not your plans; I never knew them. The epaulette I wear I never was false to."

A murmur of dissatisfaction ran along the party, and I could mark that in the words they interchanged feelings of surprise were mingled with displeasure. At last, the short man, commanding silence with a slight motion of the hand, said, "I am sorry for it; your courage merited a better cause; however, the avowal was at least an honest one; and now tell us, why came you here?"

"For the very reason I've mentioned. My presence at the château last night, and my discovery during the attack, were enough to impute guilt. How can I clear myself, without criminating those I would not name?"

"That matters but little. Doubtless, you have powerful friends—rich ones, perhaps, and in office; they will bear you harmless."

"Alas! you are wrong. I have not in all the length and breadth of France one who, if a word would save me from the scaffold, would care to speak it. I am a stranger and an alien."

"Ha!" said a fair-haired, handsome youth, starting from the grass where he had been sitting, "what would I not give now, if your lot was mine. They'd not make my heart tremble if I could forget the cabin I was born in."

"Hush! Philippe," said the other, "the weapon is not in their armoury to make a Vendean tremble— But, hark! there is the drum for the inspection. You must present yourself each day at noon, at the low postern.

yonder, and write your name; and mark me, before we part, it cannot serve *us*, it may ruin *you*, if we are seen to speak together. Trust no one here. Those whom you see yonder are half of them *moutons*."

"How?" said I, not understanding the phrase.

"Ay, it was a prison word I used," resumed he. "I would say they are but spies of the police, who, as if confined for their offences, are only here to obtain confessions from unguarded, unsuspecting prisoners. Their frankness and sincerity are snares that have led many to the guillotine: beware of them. You dare not carry your glass to your lip, but the murmured toast might be your condemnation. Adieu!" said he, and as he spoke he turned away and left the place, followed by the rest.

The disgust I felt at first for the others was certainly not lessened by learning that their guilt was stained by treachery the blackest that can disgrace humanity; and now, as I walked among them, it was with a sense of shrinking horror I recoiled from the very touch of the wretches whose smiles were but lures to the scaffold.

"Ha! our lost and strayed friend," said one, as I appeared, "come hither and make a clean breast of it. What amiable weaknesses have introduced you to the Temple?"

"In truth," said I, endeavouring to conceal my knowledge of my acquaintances' real character, "I cannot even guess, nor do I believe that any one else is wiser than myself."

"*Parbleu!* young gentleman," said the abbé, as he spied me impertinently through his glass, "you are excessively old-fashioned for your years. Don't you know that spotless innocence went out with the Bourbons? Every one since that dies in the glorious assertion of his peculiar wickedness, with certain extenuating circumstances, which he calls human nature."

"And now, then," resumed the first speaker, "for your mishap—what was it?"

"I should only deceive you were I to give any other answer than my first. Mere suspicion there may be against me—there can be no more."

"Well, well, let us have the suspicions. The *Moniteur* is late this morning, and we have nothing to amuse us."

"Who are you?" cried another, a tall, insolent-looking fellow, with a dark moustache. "That's the first question. I've seen a *mouton* in a hussar dress before now."

"I am too late a resident here," answered I, "to guess how far insolence goes unpunished; but if I were outside these walls, and you also, I'd teach you a lesson you have yet to learn, sir."

"*Parbleu!*" said one of the former speakers, "Jacques, he has you there, though it was no great sharpness to see you were a *blanc-bec*."

The tall fellow moved away, muttering to himself, as a hearty laugh broke forth among the rest.

"And now," said the abbé, with a simper, "pardon the liberty; but have you had any trifling inducement for coming to pass a few days here? Were you making love to Madame la Consulesse? or did you laugh at General Bonaparte's grand dinners? or have you been learning the English grammar? or what is it?"

I shook my head, and was silent.

"Come, come, be frank with us; unblemished virtue fares very ill here. There was a gentleman lost his head this morning, who never did anything all his life other than keep the post-office at Tarbes; but somehow he happened to let a letter pass into the bag addressed to an elderly gentleman in England, called the Count d'Artois, not knowing that the Count's letters are always 'to the care of Citizen Bonaparte.' Well, they shortened him by the neck for it. Cruel! you will say; but so much for innocence."

"For the last time then, gentlemen, I must express my sincere sorrow that I have neither murder, treason, nor any other infamy on my conscience, which might qualify me for the distinguished honour of associating with you. Such being the case, and my sense of my deficiency being so great, you will, I'm sure, pardon me if I do not obtrude on society of which I am unworthy, and which I have now the honour to wish a good-day to." With this, and a formal bow, returned equally politely by the rest, I moved on, and entered the tower.

Sombre and sad as were my own reflections, yet did I prefer their company to that of my fellow-prisoners, for

whom already I began to conceive a perfect feeling of abhorrence.

Revolted, indeed, was the indifference to fame, honour, and even life, which I already witnessed among them; but what was it compared with the deliberate treachery of men who could wait for the hour when the heart, overflowing with sorrow, opened itself for consolation and comfort, and then search its every recess for proofs of guilt that should bring the mourner to the scaffold?

How any government could need, how they could tolerate such assassins as these, I could not conceive. And was this *his* doing—were these *his* minions, whose high-souled chivalry had been my worship and my idolatry? No, no; I'll not believe it. Bonaparte knows not the dark and terrible secrets of these gloomy walls. The hero of Arcole, the conqueror of Italy, wots not of the frightful tyranny of these dungeons: did he but know them, what a destiny would wait on those who thus stain with crime and treachery the fame of that "Belle France" he made so great!

Oh! that in the hour of my accusation—in the very last of my life, were it on the step of the guillotine—I could but speak with words to reach him, and say, how glory like his must be tarnished, if such deeds went on unpunished; that while thousands and thousands were welcoming his path with cries of wild enthusiasm and joy, in the cold cells of the Temple there were breaking hearts, whose sorrow-wrung confessions were registered, whose prayers were canvassed for evidences of desires that might be converted into treason. He could have no sympathy with men like these. Not such the brave who followed him at Lodi; not kindred souls were they who died for him at Marengo. Alas! alas! how might men read of him hereafter, if by such acts the splendour of his greatness was to suffer stain. While thoughts like these filled my mind, and in the excitement of awakened indignation I trod my little cell backwards and forwards, the gaoler entered, and, having locked the door behind him, approached me.

"You are the Sous-Lieutenant Burke: is it not so? Well, I have a letter for you; I promised to deliver it on one condition only—which is, that when read, you shall

tear it in pieces. Were it known that I did this, my head would roll in the Plaine de Grenelle before daybreak to-morrow. I also promised to put you on your guard: speak to few here; confide in none; and now here is your letter."

I opened the billet hastily, and read the few lines it contained, which evidently were written in a feigned hand. "Your life is in danger—any delay may be your ruin—address the minister at once as to the cause of your detention, and for the charges under which you are committed: demand permission to consult an advocate, and, when demanded, it can't be refused. Write to Monsieur Baillet, of 4, Rue Chantereine, in whom you may trust implicitly, and who has already instructions for your defence. Accept the enclosed, and believe in the faithful attachment of a sincere friend." A *billet de banque* for three thousand francs was folded in the note, and fell to the ground as I read it.

"*Parbleu!* I'll not ask you to tear this, though," said the gaoler as he handed it to me; "and now let me see you destroy the other."

I read and re-read the few lines over and over, some new meaning striking me at each word, while I asked myself from whom it could have come. Was it De Beauvais? or dare I hope it was one dearest to me of all the world? Who, then, in the saddest hour of my existence, could step between me and my sorrow, and leave hope as my companion in the dreary solitude of a prison?

"Again, I say, be quick," cried the gaoler; "my being here so long may be remarked. Tear it at once."

He followed with an eager eye every morsel of paper as it fell from my hand, and only seemed at ease as the last dropped to the ground; and then, without speaking a word, unlocked the door and withdrew.

The shipwrecked sailor, clinging to some wave-tossed raft, and watching with bloodshot eye the falling day, where no friendly sail has once appeared, and at last, as every hope dies out one by one within him, he hears a cheer break through the plashing of the sea, calling on him to live, may feel something like what were my sensations, as once more alone in my cell I thought of the

friendly voice that could arouse me from my cold despair, and bid me hope again.

What a change came over the world to my eyes! the very cell itself no longer seemed dark and dreary; the faint sunlight that fell through the narrow window seemed soft and mellow; the voices I heard without struck me not as dissonant and harsh; the reckless gaiety I shuddered at, the dark treachery I abhorred, I could now compassionate the one, and openly despise the other; and it was with that stout determination at my heart that I sallied forth into the garden where still the others lingered, waiting for the drum that summoned them to dinner.



CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE "CHOUANS."

WHEN night came, and all was silent in the prison, I sat down to write my letter to the minister. I knew enough of such matters to be aware that brevity is the great requisite; and, therefore, without any attempt to anticipate my accusation by a defence of my motives, I simply, but respectfully, demanded the charges alleged against me, and prayed for the earliest and most speedy investigation into my conduct. Such were the instructions of my unknown friend, and, as I proceeded to follow them, their meaning at once became apparent to me. Haste was recommended, evidently to prevent such explanations and inquiries into my conduct as more time might afford. My appearance at the château might still be a mystery to them, and one which might remain unfathomable, if any plausible reason were put forward. And what more could be laid to my charge? True, the brevet of colonel found on my person; but this I could with truth allege had never been accepted

by me. They would scarcely condemn me on such testimony, unsupported by any direct charge; and who could bring such save De Beauvais? Flimsy and weak as such pretexts were, yet were they enough in my then frame of mind to support my courage and nerve my heart; but more than all I trusted in the sincere loyalty I felt for the cause of the Government and its great chief—a sentiment which, however difficult to prove, gave myself that inward sense of safety which only can flow from strong convictions of honesty. "It may so happen," thought I, "that circumstances may appear against me, but I know and feel my heart is true and firm, and, even at the worst, such a consciousness will enable me to bear whatever may be my fortune."

The next morning my altered manner and happier look excited the attention of the others, who by various endeavours tried to fathom the cause, or learn any particulars of my fate; but in vain, for already I was on my guard against even a chance expression, and, save on the most commonplace topics, held no intercourse with any. Far from being offended at my reserve, they seemed rather to have conceived a species of respect for one whose secrecy imparted something of interest to him; and while they tried, by the chance allusion to political events and characters, to sound me, I could see that, though baffled, they by no means gave up the battle.

As time wore on, this half persecution died away—each day brought some prisoner or other amongst us, or removed some of those we had to other places of confinement, and thus I became forgotten in the interest of newer events. About a week after my entrance we were walking as usual about the gardens, when a rumour ran, that a prisoner of great consequence had been arrested the preceding night, and conveyed to the Temple; and various surmises were afloat as to who he might be, or whether he should be *au secret* or at large. While the point was eagerly discussed, a low door from the house was opened, and the gaoler appeared, followed by a large, powerful man, whom in one glance I remembered as the chief of the Vendean party at the château, and the same who effected his escape in the Bois de Boulogne. He passed close to where I stood, his arm folded on his

breast—his clear blue eye bent calmly on me—yet never by the slightest sign did he indicate that we had ever met before. I divined at once his meaning, and felt grateful for what I guessed might be a measure necessary to my safety.

"I tell you," said a shrivelled old fellow, in a worn dressing-gown and slippers, who held the *Moniteur* of that day in his hand—"I tell you it is himself; and see, his hand is wounded—though he does his best to conceal the bandage in his bosom."

"Well, well—read us the account: where did it occur?" cried two or three in a breath.

The old man seated himself on a bench, and, having arranged his spectacles and unfolded the journal, held out his hand to proclaim silence, when suddenly a wild cheer broke from the distant part of the garden, whither the newly-arrived prisoner had turned his steps—a second, louder, followed, in which the wild cry of "Vive le Roi!" could be distinctly heard.

"You hear them," said the old man. "Was I right now? I knew it must be him."

"Strange enough, too, he should not be *au secret*," said another. "The generals have never been suffered to speak to any one since their confinement. But read on, let us hear it."

"'On yesterday morning,'" said the little man, reading aloud, "'Picot, the servant of George, was arrested, and although every endeavour was made to induce him to confess where his master was——'"

"Do you know the meaning of that phrase, Duchos?" said a tall, melancholy-looking man, with a bald head—"that means the torture; thumb-screws and flint vices are the mode once more; see here." As he spoke he undid a silk handkerchief that was wrapped around his wrist, and exhibited a hand that seemed actually smashed into fragments—the bones were forced in many places through the flesh, which hung in dark-coloured and blood-stained pieces about.

"I would show that hand at the tribunal," muttered an old soldier in a faded blue frock. "I'd hold it up when they'd ask me to swear."

"Your head would only fare the worse for doing so," said the abbé. "Read on, Monsieur Duchos."

"Oh, where was I?—*Pardieu!* colonel, I wish you would cover that up: I shall dream of that terrible thumb all night.—Here we are—'Though nothing could be learned from Picot, it was ascertained that the brigand——'"

"Ha, ha!" said a fat little fellow in a blouse, "they call them all brigands—Moreau is a brigand—Pichegru is a brigand too."

"That the brigand had passed Monday night near Chaillot, and on Tuesday, towards evening, was seen at Sainte-Geneviève, where it was suspected he slept on the mountain; on Wednesday the police traced him to the cabriolet stand at the end of the Rue de Condé, where he took a carriage and drove towards the Odéon.'"

"Probably he was going to the spectacle. What did they play that night?" said the fat man. "*La Mort de Barberousse*, perhaps."

The other read on.—"The officer cried out, as he seized the bridle, "*Je vous arrête!*" when George levelled a pistol and shot him through the forehead, and then springing over the dead body dashed down the street. The butchers of the neighbourhood, who knew the reward offered for his apprehension, pursued and fell upon him with their hatchets; a hand-to-hand encounter followed, in which the brigand's wrist was nearly severed from his arm, and thus disabled and overpowered, he was secured and conveyed to the Temple.'"

"And who is this man?" said I in a whisper to the tall person near me."

"The General George Cadoudal—a brave Breton, and a faithful follower of his king," replied he; "and may Heaven have pity on him now!" He crossed himself piously as he spoke, and moved slowly away.

"General Cadoudal!" repeated I to myself, "the same whose description figured on every wall of the capital, and for whose apprehension immense rewards were offered;" and with an inward shudder I thought of my chance intercourse with the man—to harbour whom was death—the dreaded chief of the Chouans—the daring Breton—of whom Paris rung with stories. And this was the companion of Henry de Beauvais. Revolving such thoughts, I strolled along unconsciously, until I reached the place where, some days before, I had seen the Vendéans engaged

in prayer. The loud tone of a deep voice arrested my steps. I stopped and listened. It was George himself who spoke; he stood, drawn up to his full height, in the midst of a large circle who sat around on the grass. Though his language was a *patois* of which I was ignorant, I could catch here and there some indication of his meaning, as much perhaps from his gesture and the look of those he addressed, as from the words themselves. It was an exhortation to them to endure with fortitude the lot that had befallen them—to meet death when it came without fear, as they could do so without dishonour—to strengthen their courage by looking to him, who would always give them an example of what they should be. The last words he spoke were in a plainer dialect, and almost these—"Throw no glance on the past. We are where we are—we are where God, in his wisdom, and for his own ends, has placed us. If this cause be just, our martyrdom is a blessed one; if it be not so, our death is our punishment; and never forget that you are permitted to meet it from the same spot where our glorious monarch went to meet his own."

A cry of "Vive le Roi!" half stifled by sobs of emotion, broke from the listeners, as they rose, and pressed around him.

There he stood in the midst, while, like children, they came to kiss his hand—to hear him speak one word—even to look on him. Their swarthy faces, where hardship and suffering had left many a deep line and furrow, beamed with smiles as he turned towards them; and many a proud look was bent on the rest by those to whom he addressed a single word. One I could not help remarking above the others, a slight, pale, and handsome youth, whose almost girlish cheek the first down of youth was shading. George leaned his arm round his neck, and called him by his name, and in a voice almost tremulous from emotion. "And you, Bouvet de Lozier, whose infancy wanted nothing of luxury and enjoyment—for whom all that wealth and affection could bestow were in abundance—how do you bear these rugged reverses, my dear boy?"

The youth looked up with eyes bathed in tears; the hectic spot in his face gave way to the paleness of death, and his lips moved without a sound.

"He has been ill—the count has," said a peasant, in a low voice.

"Poor fellow!" said George; "he was not meant for trials like these; the cares he used to bury in his mother's lap met other consolations than our ruder ones. Look up, Bouvet, my man, and remember you are a man."

The youth trembled from head to foot, and looked fearfully around, as if dreading something, while he clutched the strong arm beside him, as though for protection.

"Courage, boy—courage!" said George. "We are together here—what can harm you?"

Then dropping his voice, and turning to the rest, he added,—

"They have been tampering with his reason—his eye betrays a wandering intellect. Take him with you, Claude—he loves you—and do not leave him for a moment."

The youth pressed George's fingers to his pale lips, and, with his head bent down and listless gait, moved slowly away.

As I wandered from the spot, my heart was full of all I had witnessed. The influence of their chief had surprised me on the night of the attack on the château. But how much more wonderful did it seem now, when confined within the walls of a prison—the only exit to which was the path that led to the guillotine. Yet was their reliance on all he said as great, as implicit their faith in him, as warm their affection, as though success had crowned each effort he suggested, and that fortune had been as kind as she had proved adverse to his enterprise.

Such were the Chouans in the Temple. Life had presented to their hardy natures too many vicissitudes to make them quail beneath the horrors of a prison—death they had confronted in many shapes, and they feared it not even at the hands of the executioner. Loyalty to the exiled family of France was less a political than a religious feeling—one inculcated at the altar, and carried home to the fireside of the cottage. Devotion to their king was a part of their faith. The sovereign was but a saint the more in their calendar. The glorious triumphs of the revolutionary armies—the great conquests of the Consulate—found no sympathy within their bosoms; they neither joined the battle nor partook of the ovation. They looked

on all such as the passing pageant of the hour—and muttered to each other, that the *bon Dieu* could not bless a nation that was false to its king.

Who could see them, as they met each morning, and not feel deeply interested in these brave but simple peasants? At daybreak they knelt together in prayer, their chief officiating as priest; their deep voices joined in the hymn of their own native valleys, as with tearful eyes they sang the songs that reminded them of home. The service over, George addressed them in a short speech—some words of advice and guidance for the coming day—reminding them that ere another morning shone, many might be summoned before the tribunal to be examined, and from thence led forth to death; exhorting them to fidelity to each other, and loyalty to their glorious cause. Then came the games of their country, which they played with all the enthusiasm of liberty and happiness. These were again succeeded by hours passed in hearing and relating stories of their beloved Bretagne—of its tried faith and its ancient bravery—while, through all, they lived a community apart from the other prisoners, who never dared to obtrude upon them; nor did the most venturesome of the police spies ever transgress a limit that might have cost him his life.

Thus did two so different currents run side by side within the walls of the Temple, and each regarding the other with distrust and dislike.

While thus I felt a growing interest for these bold but simple children of the forest, my anxiety for my own fate grew hourly greater. No answer was ever returned to my letter to the minister, nor any notice taken of it whatever; and though each day I heard of some one or other being examined before the "Tribunal Spécial," or the *préfet de police*, I seemed as much forgotten as though the grave enclosed me. My dread of anything like acquaintance or intimacy with the other prisoners prevented my learning much of what went forward each day, and from which, from some source or other, they seemed well informed. A chance phrase—an odd word now and then dropped—would tell me of some new discovery by the police, or some recent confession by a captured conspirator; but of what the crime consisted, and who

were they principally implicated, I remained totally ignorant.

It was well known that both Moreau and Pichegru were confined in a part of the tower that opened upon the terrace, but neither suffered to communicate with each other, nor even to appear at large like the other prisoners. It was rumoured, too, that each day one or both were submitted to long and searching examinations, which, it was said, had hitherto elicited nothing from either, save total denial of any complicity whatever, and complete ignorance of the plots and machinations of others.

So much we could learn from the *Moniteur*, which reached us each day ; and, while assuming a tone of open reprobation regarding the Chouans, spoke in terms the most cautious and reserved respecting the two generals, as if probing the public mind how far their implication in treason might be credited, and with what faith the proofs of their participation might be received.

At last the train seemed laid ; the explosion was all prepared, and nothing wanting but the spark to ignite it. A letter from Moreau to the Consul appeared in the columns of the Government paper, in which, after recapitulating in terms most suitable the services he had rendered the Republic while in command of the army of the Rhine, the confidence the Convention had always placed in him, the frequent occasions which had presented themselves to him of gratifying ambitious views (had he conceived such), he adverted in brief but touching terms to his conduct on the 18th Brumaire, in seconding the adventurous step taken by Bonaparte himself, and attributed the neglect his devotion had met with rather to the interference and plotting of his enemies, than to any estrangement on the part of the Consul. Throughout the whole of the epistle there reigned a tone of reverence for the authority of Bonaparte most striking and remarkable ; there was nothing like an approach to the equality which might well be supposed to subsist between two great generals—albeit the one was at the height of power, and the other sunk in the very depth of misfortune. On the contrary, the letter was nothing more than an appeal to old souvenirs and former services—to one who possessed the power, if he had the will, to save him ; it breathed throughout the

sentiments of one who demands a favour, and that favour his life and honour, at the hands of him who had already constituted himself the fountain of both.

While such was the position of Moreau—a position which resulted in his downfall—chance informed us of the different ground occupied by his companion in misfortune, the General Pichegru.

About three days after the publication of Moreau's letter, we were walking as usual in the garden of the Temple, when a *huissier* came up, and, beckoning to two of the prisoners, desired them to follow him. Such was the ordinary course by which one or more were daily summoned before the tribunal for examination, and we took no notice of what had become a matter of every-day occurrence, and went on conversing as before about the news of the morning. Several hours elapsed without the others having returned, and at last we began to feel anxious about their fate, when one of them made his appearance—his heightened colour and agitated expression betokening that something more than common had occurred.

"We were examined with Pichegru," said the prisoner, who was an old quartermaster in the army of the Upper Rhine, as he sat down upon a bench and wiped his forehead with his handkerchief.

"Indeed!" said the tall colonel with the bald head; "before Monsieur Réal, I suppose?"

"Yes, before Réal. My poor old general—there he was, as I used to see him formerly, with his hand on the breast of his uniform, his pale, thin features as calm as ever, until at last, when roused, his eyes flashed fire, and his lip trembled before he broke out into such a torrent of attack——"

"Attack, say you?" interrupted the abbé; "a bold course, my faith! in one who has need of all his powers for defence."

"It was ever his tactique to be the assailant," said a bronzed, soldier-like fellow, in a patched uniform; "he did so in Holland."

"He chose a better enemy to practise it with than, than he has done now," resumed the quartermaster, sadly.

"Whom do you mean?" cried half a dozen voices together.

"The Consul."

"The Consul! Bonaparte! Attack *him!*" repeated one after the other, in accents of surprise and horror. "Poor fellow, he is deranged."

"So I almost thought myself, as I heard him," replied the quartermaster; "for, after submitting with patience to a long and tiresome examination, he suddenly, as if endurance could go no farther, cried out—'Assez!' The préfet started, and Thuriot, who sat beside him, looked up terrified, while Pichegru went on. 'So, the whole of this negotiation about Cayenne is then a falsehood. Your promise to make me governor there, if I consented to quit France for ever, was a trick to extort confession, or a bribe to silence. Be it so. Now, come what will, I'll not leave France; and, more still, I'll declare everything before the judges openly at the tribunal. The people shall know, all Europe shall know, who is my accuser, and what he is. Yes, your Consul himself treated with the Bourbons in Italy; the negotiations were begun, continued, carried on, and only broken off by his own excessive demands. Ay, I can prove it; his very return from Egypt through the whole English fleet—that happy chance, as you were won't to term it—was a secret treaty with Pitt for the restoration of the exiled family on his reaching Paris. These facts—and facts you shall confess them—are in my power to prove; and prove them I will in the face of all France.'"

"Poor Pichegru!" said the abbé, contemptuously. "What an ill-tempered child a great general may be after all! Did he think the hour would ever come for him to realize such a dream?"

"What do you mean?" cried two or three together.

"The Corsican never forgets a vendetta," was the cool reply, as he walked away.

"True," said the colonel, thoughtfully—"quite true."

To me these words were riddles. My only feeling towards Pichegru was one of contempt and pity that, in any depth of misfortune, he could resort to such an unworthy attack upon him who still was the idol of all my thoughts; and for this, the conqueror of Holland stood now as low in my esteem as the most vulgar of the rabble gang that each day saw sentenced to the galleys.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE REIGN OF TERROR UNDER THE CONSULATE.

ON the morning that followed the scene I have spoken of came the news of the arrest, the trial, and the death of the Duc d'Enghien. That terrible tragedy, which yet weighs, and will weigh for ever, on the memory of the period, reached us in our prison with all the terrible force of circumstances to make it a day of sorrow and mourning. Such details as the journals afforded but little satisfied our curiosity. The youth, the virtues, the bravery of the prince had made him the idol of his party; and while his death was lamented for his own sake, his followers read in it the determination of the Government to stop at nothing in their resolve to exterminate that party. A gloomy silence sat upon the Chouans, who no longer moved about as before, regardless of their confinement to a prison. Their chief remained apart; he neither spoke to any one, nor seemed to notice those who passed: he looked stunned and stupefied, rather than deeply affected, and when he lifted his eyes, their expression was cold and wandering. Even the other prisoners, who rarely gave way to feeling of any kind, seemed at first overwhelmed by these sad tidings; and doubtless many who before had trusted to rank and influence for their safety, saw how little dependence could be placed on such aid, when the blow had fallen upon a "Condé" himself.

I, who neither knew the political movements of the time nor the sources of the danger the Consul's party anticipated, could only mourn over the unhappy fate of a gallant prince whose daring had cost him his life, and never dreamed for a moment of calling in question the honour or good faith of Bonaparte in an affair of which I could have easily believed him totally ignorant. Such, indeed, was the representation of the *Moniteur*; and whatever doubts the hints about me might have excited, were

speedily allayed by the accounts I read of the Consul's indignation at the haste and informality of the trial, and his deep anger at the catastrophe that followed it.

"Savary will be disgraced for this," said I to the abbé who leaned over my shoulder while I read the paper. "Bonaparte can never forgive him."

"You mistake, my dear sir," replied he, with a strange expression I could not fathom; "the Consul is the most forgiving of men; he never bears malice."

"But here was a dreadful event—a crime, perhaps."

"Only a fault," resumed he. "By the bye, colonel, this order about closing the barriers will be excessively inconvenient to the good people of Paris."

"I have been thinking over that, too," said an overdressed, affected-looking youth, whose perfumed curls and studied costume formed a strange contrast with the habits of his fellow-prisoners. "If they shut up the *Barrière de l'Etoile*, what are they to do for *Longchamps*?"

"*Parbleu!* that did not strike me," interposed the colonel, tapping his forehead with his finger. "I'll wager a crown that they haven't thought of that themselves."

"The *Champs Elysées* are surely long enough for such tomfoolery," said the quartermaster, in a gruff, savage tone.

"Not one-half," was the imperturbable reply of the youth; "and *Longchamps* promised admirably this year. I had ordered a *caleche*—light blue, with gilt circles on the wheels, and a bronze carving to the pole—like an antique chariot."

"*Parbleu!* you are more likely to take your next airing in a simpler conveyance," said the quartermaster, with a grin.

"I was to have driven *la Comtesse de Beauflers* to the *Bois de Boulogne*."

"You must content yourself with the *Count de la Marque*"—the prison name of the executioner—"instead," growled out the other.

I turned away, no less disgusted at the frivolity that could only see in the dreadful event that took place the temporary interruption to a vain and silly promenade, than at the savage coarseness that could revel in the pain common misfortune gave him the privilege of inflicting.

Such, however, was the prevalent tone of thinking and

speaking there. The death of friends—the ruin of those best loved and cared for—the danger that each day came nearer to themselves—were all casualties to which habit, recklessness of life, and libertinism had accustomed them; while about former modes of life, the pleasures of the capital, its delights and dissipation, they conversed with the most eager interest. It is thus, while in some natures misfortunes will call forth into exercise the best and noblest traits that in happier circumstances had never found the necessity that gave them birth; so, in others, adversity depresses and demoralizes those weaker temperaments that seemed formed to sail safely in the calm waters, but never destined to brave the stormy seas of life.

With such associates I could have neither sympathy nor friendship; and my life passed on in one unbroken and dreary monotony—day succeeding day, and night following night—till my thoughts, turned ever inward, had worn as it were a track for themselves, in which the world without and its people had no share whatever. Not only was my application to the minister unanswered, but I was never examined before any of the tribunals; and sometimes the dreadful fate of those prisoners who, in the Reign of Terror, passed their whole life in prison, their crimes, their very existence forgotten, would cross my mind, and strike me with terror unspeakable.

If in the sombre atmosphere of the Temple a sad and cheerless monotony prevailed, events followed fast on each other in that world from which its gloomy walls excluded us; every hour was some new feature of the dark conspiracy brought to light; the vigilance of Monsieur Réal slept not night or day; and all that bribery, terror, or torture could effect, was put into requisition to obtain full and precise information as to every one concerned in the plot.

It was a bright, fresh morning in April, the sixth of the month—the day is graven on my memory—when, on walking forth into the garden, I was surprised to see the prisoners standing in a circle round a tree on which a placard was fastened, with glances eagerly turned towards the paper, or bent sadly to the ground. They stood around, sad and silent: to my question of what had occurred, a significant look at the tree was the only reply I received, while in the faces of all I perceived that some dreadful

news had reached them. Forcing my way with difficulty through the crowd, I at length approached near enough to read the placard, on which, in large letters, was written,—

“*Charles Pichegru, ex-Général Républicain, s'est étranglé dans sa prison.*”

“6 Avril. Le Temple.”

“And did Pichegru, the great conqueror of Holland, die by his own hand?” said I, as my eye rested on the fatal bulletin.

“Don't you read it, young man?” replied a deep, solemn voice beside me, which I at once knew was that of General George himself. “Can you doubt the accuracy of information supplied by the police?”

The by-standers looked up with a terrified and frightened expression, as if dreading lest the very listening to his words might be construed into an acquiescence in them.

“Trust me, he is dead,” continued he. “They who have announced his fate here have a right to be relied on. It now only remains to be seen how he died. These prison maladies have a strange interest for us who live in the infected climate; and, if I mistake not, I see the *Moniteur* yonder, a full hour before its usual time. See what a blessing, gentlemen, you enjoy in a paternal Government, which, in moments of public anxiety, can feel for your distress, and hasten to alleviate it.”

The tone of sarcasm he spoke in, the measured fall of every word, sank into the hearers' minds, and though they stood mute, they did not even move from the spot.

“Here is the *Moniteur* now,” said the quartermaster, opening the paper and reading aloud.

“‘To his oft-repeated assurances that he would make no attempt upon his life——’”

A rude burst of laughter from George interrupted the reader here.

“I ask your pardon, sir,” said he, touching his cap; “proceed. I promise not to interrupt you again.”

“‘That he would make no attempt upon his life, General Pichegru obtained permission that the sentries should be stationed outside his cell during the night. Having pro-

vided himself with a fagot, which he secreted beneath his bed, he supped as usual in the evening of yesterday, eating heartily at eleven o'clock, and retiring to rest by twelve. When thus alone he placed the stick within the folds of the black silk cravat he generally wore round his neck, in such a manner as, when twisted, to act like a tourniquet; and having turned it with such a degree of force as to arrest the return of blood from the head, he fastened it beneath his head and shoulders, and in this manner, apoplexy supervening, expired."

"*Par St. Louis, sir,*" cried George, "the explanation is admirable, and most satisfactorily shows how a man may possess life long enough to be certain he has killed himself. The only thing wanting is for the general to assist in dressing the *procès-verbal*, when doubtless his own views of his case would be equally edifying and instructive; and see, already the ceremony has begun."

As he spoke, he pointed to a number of persons who crossed the terrace, preceded by Savary, in his uniform of the *gendarmes d'élite*, and who went in the direction of the cell where the dead body lay.

The prisoners now fell into little knots and groups, talking beneath their breath, and apparently terrified at every stir about them. Each compared his sensation of what he thought he heard during the night with the other's. Some asserted that they distinctly heard the chains of the drawbridge creak long after midnight; others vouched for the quick tramp of feet along the corridors, and the sounds of strange voices; one, whose cell was beneath that of Pichegru, said that he was awoke before day by a violent crash overhead, followed by a harsh sound like coughing, which continued for some time, and then ceased entirely. These were vague, uncertain signs, yet what horrible thoughts did they not beget in each listener's mind!

As I stood terror-struck and speechless, I felt a tap on my shoulder. I turned; it was the abbé, who, with a smile of peculiar irony, stood behind me.

"Poor Savary!" said he, in a whisper; "how will he ever get over this blunder, and it so very like the former one?"

He did not wait for a reply, but moved away.

"Who is to be the next, sir?" cried George, with a deep

voice, as he saw the assemblage thus accidentally collected about to break up—"Moreau, perhaps. One thing I bid you all bear witness to: suicide is a crime I'll never commit. Let no narrative of a cravat and a fagot——"

"Do you never eat mushrooms, general?" said the abbé, dryly; and, whether from the manner of the speaker, or the puzzled look of him to whom the speech was addressed, the whole crowd burst into a fit of laughter—the emotion seemed like one in which relief was felt by all. They laughed long and loud—and now the faces that a minute before were marked by every character of deep affliction, looked merry and happy. Each had some story, some apropos to tell, or some smart witticism to let off against his neighbour; and to hear them you would say that never was there a subject more suggestive of drollery than the one of suicide and sudden death.

And thus was it ever. No event, however dreadful—no circumstance, however shocking, could do more than momentarily affect those whose life possessed no security, was governed by no principle. Levity and unbelief—unbelief that extended not only to matters of religion, but actually penetrated every relation of life, rendering them sceptical of friendship, love, truth, honour, and charity—were the impulses under which they lived; and they would have laughed him to scorn who should have attempted to establish another code of acting or thinking. Such feelings, if they made them but little suited to all the habits and charities of life, certainly rendered them most indifferent to death; and much of that courage so much lauded and admired on the scaffold, had no other source than in the headlong recklessness the prison had inculcated—the indifference to everything, where everything was questionable and doubtful.

I struggled powerfully against the taint of such a consuming malady. I bethought me of my boyhood and its early purpose—of him who first stirred my soul to ambition—and asked myself, what would he have thought of me had I yielded to such a trial as this? I pictured before me a career, when such devotion as I felt, aided by a stout heart, must win its way to honour: and when roused to thought, these low, depressing dreams, these dark hours of doubt and despair, vanished before it. But

gradually my health gave way—my lethargic apathy increased upon me—the gloomy walls of my cell had thrown their shadow over my spirit, and I sank into a state of moping indifference, in which I scarcely marked the change of day and night; and felt at length that had the sentence been pronounced which condemned me for life to the walls of the Temple, I could have heard it without emotion.

"Come, sous-lieutenant, it's your turn now!" said the turnkey, entering my cell one morning, where I sat alone at breakfast; "I have just received the orders for your appearance."

"How! where?" said I, scarcely able to do more than guess at the meaning of his words; "before the préfet, is it?"

"No, no, a very different affair, indeed: you are summoned with the Chouan prisoners to appear at the Palais de Justice."

"The Palais!" said I, as for the first time for weeks past a sentiment of fear crept through me. "Are we to be tried without having a list of the charges alleged against us?"

"You'll hear them time enough in court."

"Without an advocate to defend us."

"The president will name one for that purpose."

"And can the jury——"

"Jury! there is no jury; the Consul has suspended trial by jury for two years. Come, come, don't be down-hearted—your friends without are singing away as gaily as though it were a festival. My faith, that General George is made of iron, I believe. He has been confined *au secret* these ten days—his rations diminished to almost a starvation level; and yet there is he now, with his countenance as calm, and his look as firm, as if he were at large on the hills of La Vendée. Cheer up, then—let the example of your chief——"

"Chief! he is no chief of mine."

"That's as it may, or may not be," replied he, gruffly, as though wounded by what he deemed a want of confidence in his honour; "however, make haste and dress, for the carriages will be here to convey you to the Palais—and there now are the *gendarmes d'élite* assembling in the court."

As I proceeded to dress, I could see from the window of my cell that a squadron of gendarmes, in full uniform, were drawn up in the square of the prison, along one side of which were several carriages standing, each with two gendarmes seated on the box. The prisoners were confined to their walls; but at every window some face appeared peering anxiously at the proceedings beneath, and watching, with inquisitive gaze, every, even the slightest, movement.

Just as the clock struck nine the door of my cell was opened, and a greffier of the court entered, and, taking from a black portmanteau at his side a roll of paper, began, without delay, to repeat in a sing-song recitative tone a formal summons of the Grand Tribunal for the "surrender of the body of Thomas Burke, sous-lieutenant of the *huitième* hussars, now in the prison of the Temple, and accused of the crime of treason."

The last word made me shudder as it fell from him; and not all my stoical indifference of weeks past was proof against such an accusation. The gaoler having formally listened to the document, and replied by reading aloud another, delivered me over to the officer, who desired me to follow him.

In the court beneath the greater number of the prisoners were already assembled. George, among the number, was conspicuous, not only by his size and proportions, but by a handsome uniform, in the breast of which he wore his decoration of St. Louis, from which descended a bright bow of crimson ribbon. A slight bustle at one of the doorways of the tower suddenly seemed to attract his attention, and I saw that he turned quickly round, and forced his way through the crowd to the place. Eager to learn what it was, I followed him at once. Pushing with some difficulty forward, I reached the doorway, on the step of which lay a young man in a fainting fit. His face, pale as death, had no colour save two dark circles round the eyes, which, though open, were upturned and filmy. His cravat had been hastily removed by some of the bystanders, and showed a purple welt around his neck, on one side of which a mass of blood escaping beneath the skin, made a dreadful-looking tumour. His dress denoted a person of condition, as well as the character of his fea-

tures; but never had I looked upon an object so sad and woe-begone before. At his side knelt George—his strong arm round his back, while his great massive hand patted the water on his brow. The stern features of the hardy Breton, which ever before had conveyed to me nothing but daring and impetuous passion, were softened to a look of womanly kindness—his blue eye beaming as softly as though it were a mother leaning over her infant.

"Bouvet, my dear, dear boy, remember *thou art a Breton*—rally thyself, my child—bethink thee of the cause."

The name of the youth at once recalled him whom I had seen some months before among the Chouan prisoners; and who, sad and sickly as he then seemed, was now much further gone towards the tomb.

"Bouvet," cried George, in an accent of heartrending sorrow, "this will disgrace us for ever."

The youth turned his cold eyes round till they were fixed on the other's face; while his lips, still parted, and his cheek pale and flattened, gave him the appearance of a corpse suddenly called back to life.

"There, my own brave boy," said George, kissing his forehead—"there, thou art thyself again." He bent over till his lips nearly touched the youth's ear, and then whispered—"Dost thou forget the last words Monsieur spoke to thee, Bouvet?—'Conserve-toi pour tes amis, et contre nos ennemis communs.'"

The boy started up at the sounds, and looked wildly about him, while his hands were open wide with a kind of spasmodic motion.

"*Tonnerre de ciel!*" cried George, with frantic passion, "what have they done with him—his mind is gone. Bouvet—Bouvet de Lozier—knowest thou this?" He tore from his bosom a miniature, surrounded with large brilliants, and held it to the eyes of the youth.

A wild shriek broke from the youth as he fell back in strong convulsions. The dreadful cry seemed like the last wail of expiring reason—so sad, so piercing was its cadence.

"Look, see," said George, turning a savage scowl upon the crowd, "they have taken away his mind—he is an idiot."

"The General George Cadoudal," cried a loud voice from the centre of the court.

“Here,” was the firm reply.

“This way, sir—the carriage yonder.”

“Monsieur Sol de Gissoles.”

“Here,” replied a tall, aristocratic-looking personage, in deep mourning.

Sous-Lieutenant Burke was next called, and I followed the others, and soon found myself seated in a close *calèche*, with a gendarme beside me, while two mounted men of the corps sat at either side of the carriage with drawn swords. Picot, the servant of George, the faithful Breton, was next summoned, and Lebourgeois, an old but handsome man, in the simple habit of a farmer, with his long white hair, and soft kind countenance. Many other names were called over, and nearly an hour elapsed before the ceremony was concluded, and the order was given to move forward.

At last the heavy gates were opened, and the procession issued forth. I was surprised to see that the entire Boulevard was lined with troops, behind which thousands of people were closely wedged—all the windows, and even the house-tops, being filled with spectators.

When we reached the quays, the crowd was greater still; and it required all the efforts of the troops to keep it back sufficiently to permit an open space for the carriages—while at all the streets that opened at the quays, mounted dragoons were stationed, to prevent any carriage passing down. Never had I beheld such a vast multitude of people; and yet, through all that crowded host, a deep, solemn silence prevailed—not a cry nor a shout was heard in all the way. Once only, at the corner of the Pont Neuf, a cry of “Vive Moreau!” was given by some one in the crowd; but it was a solitary voice—and the moment after I saw a gendarme force his way through the mass, and seizing a miserable-looking creature by the neck, hurry him along beside his horse towards the guard-house.

On crossing the bridge, I saw that a company of artillery and two guns were placed in position beside Desaix’s monument, so as to command the Pont Neuf: all these preparations clearly indicating that the Government felt the occasion such as to warrant the most energetic measures of security. There was something in the earnest

look of the cannoniers, as they stood with their lighted matches beside the guns, that betrayed the resolve of one whose quick determination was ever ready for the moment of danger.

The narrow streets of the Isle St. Louis, more densely crowded than any part of the way, slackened our pace considerably, and frequently the gendarmes were obliged to clear the space before the carriages could proceed. I could not help feeling struck, as we passed along these miserable and dark alleys—where vice and crime, and wretchedness of every type, herded together—to hear, at every step, some expressions of pity or commiseration from those who, themselves, seemed the veriest objects of compassion. "*Ah, voilà,*" cried an old creature in rags, on whose cotton bonnet a faded and dirty tricolored ribbon was fastened—"*voilà* Moreau! I'd know his proud face any day. Poor general, I hope it will not go hard with you to-day!"

"Look there," screamed a hag, as the carriage in which Bouvet sat passed by. "Look at the handsome youth that's dying—Holy Virgin! he'll not be living when they reach the gate of the Palais!" "And there," cried another, "there's a hussar officer, pale enough, I trow he is; come, I'll say a prayer or two for him there, it can do him no harm anyhow."

The hoarse rattle of a drum in front mingled with the noise of the cavalcade, and I now could hear the clank of a guard turning out. The minute after we stood before a colossal gateway, whose rich tracery shone in the most gorgeous gilding; it was in the splendid taste of Louis XIV., and well became the entrance of what once had been a royal palace. "Alas!" thought I, "how unlike those who once trod this wide court is the melancholy cortège that now enters it."

As each carriage drew up at the foot of a wide flight of stone steps, the prisoners descended, and, escorted by gendarmes on each side, were led into the building. When all had reached the hall, the order was given to move forward, and we walked on till we came to a long gallery. On either side was a range of massive pillars, between which views were obtained of various spacious but dimly-lighted chambers, apparently neglected and unused; some

benches here and there, an old cabinet, and a deal table, were all the furniture. Here we halted for a few moments, till a door opening at the extreme end, a sign was made for us to advance, and now we heard a low rushing sound, like the distant breaking of the sea in a calm night. It grew louder as we went, till we could mark the mingling of several hundred voices, as they conversed in a subdued and under tone.

Then, indeed, a dreadful thrill ran through me, as I thought of the countless mass before whom I was to stand forth a criminal, and it needed every effort in my power to keep my feet.

A heavy curtain of dark cloth yet separated us from a view of the court, but we could hear the voice of the president commanding silence, and the monotonous intonation of the clerk reading the order for the proceedings. This concluded, a deep voice called out, "Introduce the prisoners," and the words were repeated still louder by a *huissier* at the entrance; and at a signal the line moved forward, the curtain was drawn back, and we advanced into the court.

The crowd of faces that filled the vast space from the body of the court below to the galleries above, turned, as we passed on to the bench, at one side of the raised platform, near the seat of the judges. A similar bench, but unoccupied, ran along the opposite side, while directly in front of the judges were ranged the advocates in rows closely packed as they could sit; a small desk, somewhat advanced from the rest, being the seat reserved for the Procureur-Général of the court.

The vast multitude of spectators—the pomp and circumstance of a court of justice—the solemn look of the judges, arrayed in their dark robes and square black caps, reminding one of the officers of the Inquisition, as we see them in old paintings—the silence where so many were assembled—all struck me with awe, and I scarcely dared to look up, lest in the glances bent upon me I should meet some whose looks might seem to condemn me.

"Proclaim the *séance*," said the President.

And with a loud voice the *huissier* of the court made proclamation that the tribunal had commenced its sitting. This concluded, the Procureur-Général proceeded to read

the names of the accused, beginning with Général Moreau, Armand de Polignac, Charles de Rivière, Sol de Gissoles, George Cadoudal, and some twenty others of less note, among which I heard with a sinking heart my own name pronounced. Some customary formalities seemed now to occupy the court for a considerable time ; after which, the *huissier* called silence once more.

"Général Moreau," said the President, in a deep voice that was heard throughout the entire court. "Rise up, sir," added he, after a few seconds' pause. I looked down the bench, at the farthest end of which I saw the tall and well-knit figure of a man in the uniform of a general of the Republic ; his back was turned towards me, but his bearing and carriage were quite enough to distinguish the soldier.

"Your name and surname," said the President.

Before an answer could be returned, a dull sound, like something heavy falling, resounded through the court, and in an instant several persons around me stood up. I bent forward to see, and beheld the figure of Bouvet de Lozier stretched insensible upon the ground ; beside him his faithful friend George was stooping, and endeavouring to open his vest to give him air.

"Bring some water here quickly," cried the hardy Breton, in a tone that showed little respect for where he stood. "Your absurd ceremonial has frightened the poor boy out of his senses."

"Respect the court, sir, or I commit you!" said the President, in a voice of anger.

A contemptuous look, followed by a still more contemptuous shrug of the shoulders, was his reply.

"Remove the prisoner," said the President, pointing to the still fainting youth, "and proclaim silence in the court."

The officers of the tribunal carried the death-like figure of the boy down the steps, and bore him to some of the chambers near.

This little incident, slight and passing as it was, seemed much to affect the auditory, and it was some time before perfect silence could be again restored.

"So much for the régime of the Temple," said George, aloud, as he looked after the insensible form of his friend.

"Silence, sir!" cried one of the judges, M. Thuriot, a harsh and severe-looking man, whose hatred to the prisoners was the subject of much conversation in the prison.

"Ah, it is you, Tue-Roi!" cried George, punning upon his name, for he had been one of the regicides. "You, there—I thought they had found you out long ere this."

A burst of laughter that nothing could repress broke through the crowded court, and it was not until some five or six persons were forcibly removed by the gendarmes that order was again restored.

"Read the act of accusation," said the President, in a deep solemn voice.

"In the name of the Republic, one and indivisible——"

"Monsieur le Président," interrupted the Procureur-Général, "I would submit to the court that, as in the first accusation there are several of the prisoners not included, they should not remain during the recital of the indictment."

A conversation of some minutes now took place between the judges, during which again the silence was unbroken in the court. I turned gladly from the gaze of the thousand spectators to the bench where my fellow-prisoners were seated; and, however varied by age, rank, and occupation, there seemed but one feeling amongst them—a hardy and resolute spirit to brave every danger without flinching.

"Which of the prisoners are not accused under the first act?" said Thuriot.

"Charles Auguste Rebarde, *dit le Noir*, Guillaume Leberte, and Thomas Burke, Sous-Lieutenant in the 8th Regiment of Hussars."

"Let them withdraw," said the President.

A slight bustle ensued in the body of the court as the gendarmes advanced to make a passage for our exit; and for a moment I could perceive that the attention of the assembly was drawn towards us. One by one we descended to the platform, and, with a gendarme on either side, proceeded to pass out, when suddenly the deep, mellow voice of Cadoudal called out aloud,—

"Adieu, my friends, adieu! If we are not to be better treated than our prince, we shall never see you again."

"Silence, sir!" cried the President, severely; and then, turning towards the bar of advocates, he continued, "If that man have an advocate in this court, it would well become him to warn his client that such continued insult to the tribunal can only prejudice his cause."

"I have none, and I wish for none," replied George, in a tone of defiance. "This mockery is but the first step of the guillotine, and I can walk it without assistance."

A renewed call of "Silence!" and a deep murmur through the assembly, was all I heard, as the door of the court opened and closed behind us. As we marched along a low vaulted corridor the sounds of the court grew fainter and fainter; and at last the echoes of our own steps were the only noises.

The room to which we were conducted was a small whitewashed chamber, around which ran a bench of unpainted wood. A deal table stood in the centre, on which was a common-looking earthenware jar of water, and some tin goblets. The window was several feet from the ground, and strongly barred with iron.

"La salle d'attente is gloomy enough," said one of my companions, "and yet some of us may be very sorry to leave it."

"Not I, at least," cried the other, resolutely. "The basket beneath the guillotine will be an easier couch than I have slept on these three months."



CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE "PALAIS DE JUSTICE."

"It will go hard with Moreau to-day," said the elder of the two prisoners—a large, swarthy-looking Breton, in the dress of a sailor; "the Consul hates him."

"Whom does he not hate?" said the younger—a slight and handsome youth. "Whom does he not hate that ever rivalled him in glory? What love did he bear to Kléber or Desaix?"

"It is false," said I, fiercely. "Bonaparte's greatness stands far too high to feel such rivalry as theirs—the conqueror of Italy and of Egypt——"

"Is a Corsican," interrupted the elder.

"And a tyrant," rejoined the other, in the same breath.

"These words become you well," said, I bitterly; "would that no stain lay on my honour, and I could make you eat them."

"And who are you that dare to speak thus?" said the younger; "or how came one like you mixed up with men whose hearts were in a great cause, and who came to sell their lives upon it?"

"I tell you, boy," broke in the elder, in a slow and measured tone, "I have made more stalwart limbs than thine bend, and stronger joints crack, for less than thou hast ventured to tell us; but sorrow and suffering are hard masters, and I can bear more now than I was wont to do. Let us have no more words."

As he spoke, he leaned his head upon his hand, and turned towards the wall; the other, too, sat down in a corner of the cell, and was silent, and thus we remained for hours long.

The dreary stillness, made more depressing by the presence of the two prisoners, whose deep-drawn breathings were the only sounds they uttered, had something un-

speakably sad and melancholy in it, and more than once I felt sorry for the few words I had spoken, which separated those whose misfortunes should have made them brothers.

A confused and distant hum, swelling and falling at intervals, now filled the air; and gradually I could distinguish the shouts of people at a distance. This increased as it came nearer, and then I heard the tramping noise of many feet, and of a great multitude of people passing in the street below, and suddenly a wild cheer broke forth—"Vive le Consul!" "Vive Bonaparte!" followed the next instant by the clanking sound of a cavalry escort, while the cry grew louder and louder, and the *vivas* drowned all other sounds.

"You hear them, Guillaume, you hear them," said the sailor to the other prisoner. "That shout is our death-cry. Bonaparte comes not here to-day but to see his judges do his bidding."

"What care I?" said the other, fiercely. "The guillotine or the sabre, the axe or the bayonet—it is all one. We knew what must come of it."

The door opened as he spoke, and a greffier of the tribunal appeared with four gendarmes.

"Come, messieurs," said he, "the court is waiting for you."

"And how go matters without, sir?" said the elder, in an easy tone.

"Badly for the prisoners," said the greffier, shaking his head; "Monsieur Moreau, the general's brother, has done much injury—he has insulted the Consul."

"Bravely done!" cried the younger man, with enthusiasm. "It is well he should hear truth one day, though the tongue that uttered it should be cold the next."

"Move on, sir," said the greffier, sternly. "Not you," added he, as I pressed forward after the rest. "Your time has not come."

"Would that it had," said I, as the door closed upon me, and I was left in total solitude.

The day was over, and the evening already late, when a turnkey appeared, and desired me to follow him. A moody indifference to everything had settled on me, and I never spoke, as I walked behind him down corridor after corridor, and across a court, into a large, massive-looking

building, whose grated windows and strongly-barred doors reminded me of the Temple.

"Here is your cell," said he, roughly, as he unlocked a low door near the entrance.

"It is gloomy enough," said I, with a sad smile.

"And yet many have shed tears to leave it before now," rejoined he, with a savage twinkle of his small eyes.

I was glad when the hoarse crash of the closed door told me I was alone, and I threw myself upon my bed and buried my face in my hands.

There is a state which is not sleep, and yet is akin to it, into which grief can bring us—a half-dreary stupor, where only sorrows are felt, and even they come dulled and blunted, as if time and years had softened down their sting. But no ray of hope shines there—a dreary waste, without a star; the cold, dark sea, boundless and bleak, is not more saddening than life then seems before us. There is neither path to follow nor goal to reach, and an apathy worse than death creeps over all our faculties; and yet, when we awake, we wish for this again. Into this state I sank, and when morning came felt sorry that the light should shine into my narrow cell, and rouse me from my stupor. When the turnkey entered to bring me breakfast, I turned towards the wall, and trembled lest he should speak to me; and it was with a strange thrill I heard the door close as he went out. The abandonment of one's sorrow—that daily, hourly indulgence in grief, which the uncheered solitude of a prison begets—soon brings the mind to the narrow range of one or two topics. With the death of hope all fancy and imagination perish—the springs of all speculation are dried up—and every faculty bent towards one point—the reason, like a limb unexercised, wastes and pines, and becomes paralyzed.

Now and then the thought would flash across me, "What if this were madness?" and I shuddered not at the thought: such had my prison made me.

Four days and nights passed over thus—a long, monotonous dream, in which I counted not the time, and I lay upon my straw-bed watching the expiring light of the candle with that strange interest one attaches to everything within the limits of a prison-cell. The flame waned and flickered: now lighting up for a second the cold

grey walls, scratched with many a prisoner's name ; now subsiding, it threw strange and fitful shapes upon them—figures that seemed to move and to beckon to each other—goblin outlines, wild and fanciful ; then came a bright flash as the wick fell, and all was dark.

"If the dead do but sleep!" was the first thought that crossed my mind as the gloom of total night wrapped every object about me, and a stillness most appalling prevailed. Suddenly I heard the sounds of a heavy bolt withdrawn, and a door opening, then a low, rushing noise, like wind blowing through a narrow corridor, and at last the marching sounds of feet, and the accents of men speaking together ; nearer and nearer they came, and at length halted at the door of my cell. A cold, faint feeling—the sickness of the heart—crept over me ; the hour—the sounds reminded me of what so often I had heard men speak of in the Temple, and the dread of assassination made me tremble from head to foot. The light streamed from beneath the door, and reached to my bed ; and I calculated the number of steps it would take before they approached me. The key grated in the lock, and the door opened slowly, and three men stood at the entrance. I sprang up wildly to my feet—a sudden impulse of self-defence seized me—and, with a wild shout for them to come on, I rushed forward ; my foot, however, caught the angle of the iron bedstead, and I fell headlong and senseless to the ground. Some interval elapsed ; and, when next I felt consciousness, I was lying full length on my bed—the cell lit up by two candles on the table, beside which sat two men, their heads bent eagerly over a mass of papers before them. One was an old and venerable-looking man, his white hair and long queue so bespeaking him ; he wore a loose cloth cloak that covered his entire figure, but I could see that a brass scabbard of a sword projected beneath it ; on the chair beside him, too, there lay a foraging-cap. The other, much younger, though still not in youth, was a thin, pale, careworn man ; his forehead was high, and strongly marked ; and there was an intensity and determination in his brow and about the angles of his mouth most striking ; he was dressed in black, with deep ruffles at his wrist.

"It is quite clear, general." said he, in a low and mea-

sured voice, where each word fell with perfect distinctness—"it is quite clear that they can press a conviction here if they will. The allegations are so contrived as rather to indicate complicity than actually establish it. The defence in such cases has to combat shadows, not overturn facts; and, believe me, a procureur-général, aided by a police, is a dexterous enemy."

"I have no doubt of it," said the general, rapidly, "but what are the weak points?—where is he most assailable?"

"Everywhere," said the other. "To begin—the secret information of the outbreak between Lord Whitworth and the Consul—the frequent meetings with the Marquis de Beauvais—the false report to the chef de police—the concealment of this abbé—— By the bye, I am not quite clear about that part of the case; why have not the prosecution brought this abbé forward? It is plain they have his evidence, and can produce him if they will: and I see no other name in the act of accusation than our old acquaintance, Mehée de la Touche——"

"The villain!" cried the general, with a stamp of indignation, while a convulsive spasm seemed to shake every fibre of his frame.

"Mehée de la Touche!" said I to myself. "I have heard that name before;" and like a lightning flash it crossed my mind that such was the name of the man Marie de Meudon charged me with knowing.

"But still," said the general, "what can they make of all these? that of indiscretion, folly, breach of discipline, if you will; but——"

"Wait a little," said the other, quietly; "then comes the night of the chateau, in which he is found among the Chouan party in their very den, taking part in the defence."

"No, no! Lamoricière, who commanded the cuirassiers, can establish the fact beyond question—that Burke took no part in the affray, and delivered his sword at once when called on."

"At least they found him there, and on his person the brevet of colonel, signed by monsieur himself."

"Of that I can give no explanation," replied the general; "but I am in possession of such information as

can account for his presence at the château, and establish his innocence on that point."

"Indeed!" cried the advocate, for such he was; "with that much may be done."

"Unhappily, however," rejoined the general, "if such a disclosure is not necessary to save his life, I cannot venture to give it; the ruin of another must follow the explanation."

"Without it he is lost," said the advocate, solemnly.

"And would not accept of life with it," said I, boldly, as I started up in my bed, and looked fixedly at them.

The general sprang back, astonished and speechless; but the advocate, with more command over his emotions, cast his eyes upon the paper before him, and quickly asked, "And the commission—how do you account for that?"

"It was offered to and refused by me. He who made the proposal forgot it on my table, and I was about to restore it when I was made prisoner."

"What condition was attached to your acceptance of it?"

"Some vague, indistinct proposals were made to me to join a conspiracy of which I was neither told the object nor intentions. Indeed, I stopped any disclosure by rejecting the bribe."

"Who made these same proposals?"

"I shall not tell his name."

"No matter," said the advocate, carelessly; "it was the Marquis de Beauvais;" and then, as if affecting to write, I saw his sharp eyes glance over towards me, while a smile of gratified cunning twitched his lip. "You will have no objection to say how first you became acquainted with him?"

The dexterity of this query, by replying to which I at once established his preceding assumption, completely escaped me, and I gave an account of my first meeting with De Beauvais, without ever dreaming of the inferences it led to.

"An unhappy rencontre, sir," said the advocate, as if musing; "better have finished the intimacy, as you first intended, at the Bois de Boulogne."

"It may be as you say, sir," said I, irritated by the

flippancy of his remark; "but perhaps I may ask the name of the gentleman who takes such interest in my affairs, and by what right he meddles in them?"

The general started back in his chair, and was about to speak, when the advocate laid his hand gently on his arm to restrain him, and, in a voice of the most unruffled smoothness, replied, "As to my name, sir, it is Laurence Baillot; my rank is simple *avocat* to the Cours et Tribunaux; and the 'right' by which I interfere in matters personal to you is the consideration of fifty louis which accompanied this brief."

"And my name, young man, is Lieutenant-Général d'Auvergne," said the old man, proudly, as he stared me steadfastly in the face. I arose at once, and saluted the general with a deep and respectful obeisance. It was the same officer who reviewed us at the Polytechnique the day of my promotion.

"You are now, I hope, satisfied with the reasons of our presence, and that nothing but considerations of your interest can have influenced our visit," said the *avocat*, with calmness. "Such being the case, sit down here, and relate all you can of your life since your leaving the Polytechnique; be brief, too, for it is now three o'clock—the court opens at ten, your case will be called the second, and I must at least have three hours of sleep."

The general pointed to a seat beside him; I sat down, and without any delay proceeded to give a rapid account of all my adventures and proceedings to the hour we were then assembled, only omitting all mention of Mademoiselle de Meudon's name, and such allusions to De Beauvais as might lead to his crimination.

The advocate wrote down, as rapidly as I spoke them, the principal details of my history, and when I had concluded, perused the notes he had taken with a quick eye. "This will never do," said he, with more impatience in his manner than I had yet witnessed; "here are a mass of circumstances all unexplained, and all suspicious. It is now entirely a question of the feeling of the court. The charges, if pressed, must lead to a conviction. Your innocence, sir, may satisfy—indeed, it has satisfied—General d'Auvergne, who else had not been here this night, but the proofs are not before us." He paused for a

moment, and then continued in a lower tone, addressing himself directly to the general: "We must entreat a delay; a day—two days, certainly—will establish the proofs against George and his accomplices; they will be condemned and executed at once. It is most likely that the court will not recur to capital punishment again. The example being made, any further demonstration will be needless. I see you put little faith in this manoeuvre; but, trust me, I know the temper of the tribunal; besides, the political stroke has already succeeded. Bonaparte has conquered all his enemies; his next step will be to profit by the victory." These words were riddles to me at the time, though the day soon came when their meaning was palpable. "Yes, two days will do it," said he, confidently raising his voice as he spoke; "and then, whether there be a hussar the more, or one the less, in France, will little trouble the current of events."

"Then how to obtain the time—that is the question," said the general.

"Oh, we shall try something; there can always be a witness to be called; some evidence all-essential not forthcoming; some necessary proof not quite unravelled. What if we summoned this same abbé? The court will make proclamation for him. D'Ervan is the name?"

"Yes; but if by so doing he may be involved——"

"Fear nothing on that score; he'll never turn up, believe me. We can affect to show that his evidence is all-important. Yes, we'll make the Abbé d'Ervan our first witness. Where shall we say he resides? Rouen, I suppose, will do. Yes, Rouen." And so, without waiting for a reply, he continued to write. "By this, you perceive," he remarked, "we shall disconcert their plans. They are evidently keeping this abbé up for some greater occasion; they have a case against himself, perhaps, in which the proofs are not yet sufficient for conviction. We'll trouble their game, and they may be glad to compromise with us."

The general looked as much confounded as myself at these schemes of the lawyer, but we both were silent.

A few questions more followed, to which he wrote down my answers as I gave them, and then starting up, he said, "And now, general, I must hasten home to bed. Be

ready, at all events, for appearing before the tribunal, Mr. Burke; at ten you will be called, and so, good night." He bowed formally to me, as he opened the door to permit the general to pass out first.

"I'll follow you in a moment," said the general, while he closed the door after him, and remained behind with me in the cell. "It was only this evening, sir," said he, in a low voice, "at the return of Madame Bonaparte from Boulogne, that Mademoiselle de Meudon learned you were not at liberty. She has made me acquainted with the circumstances by which your present risk has been incurred, and has put me in possession of wherewithal to establish your innocence as regards the adventure at the Château d'Ancre. This disclosure, if it exculpates *you*, will of course criminate *her*, and among those, too, where she has been received and admitted on terms of the closest friendship. The natural desire to save her cousin's life will not cover the act by which so horrible a conspiracy might have escaped punishment. Bonaparte never forgives! Now, I am in possession of this proof, and if you demand it, it shall be in your keeping. I have no hesitation in saying that the other charges against you can easily be got over—this one being refuted. What do you say?"

"Nothing could make me accept of such an exculpation," said I, resolutely; "and were it offered in spite of me, I'll plead guilty to the whole act, and suffer with the rest."

The old man's eyes glistened with pleasure, and I thought I saw a tear fall on his cheek. "Now," cried he, as he grasped my hand in both his—"now I feel that you are innocent, my brave boy, and, come what will, I'll stand by you." With that he hurried from the cell, and followed the advocate, who was already calling with some impatience to have the doors unlocked.

I was again alone. No, not alone—for in my narrow cell hope was with me now.



CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE "TRIAL."

So doubtful was the Government of the day in what way the people of Paris would be disposed to regard the trial of the Chouan prisoners, how far public sympathy might side with misfortune and heroism, and in what way they would regard Moreau, whose career in arms so many had witnessed with pride and enthusiasm, that for several days they did not dare to strike the decisive blow which was to establish their guilt, but advanced with slow and cautious steps, gradually accumulating a mass of small circumstances, on which the *Moniteur* each day commented, and the other journals of less authority expatiated, as if to prepare the public mind for further and more important revelations.

At last, however, the day arrived in which the mine was to be sprung. The secret police—whose information extended to all that went on in every class of the capital, and who knew the chit-chat of the highest circles, equally as they did the grumblings of the Faubourg St. Antoine—pronounced the time had come when the fatal stroke might no longer be withheld, and when the long-destined vengeance should descend on their devoted heads.

The want of energy on the part of the prosecution—the absence of important witnesses, and of all direct evidence whatever, which marked the first four days of the trial, had infused a high hope and a strong sense of security into the prisoners' hearts. The proofs which they so much dreaded, and of whose existence they well knew, were not forthcoming against them. The rumoured treachery of some of their party began, at length, to lose its terror for them—while in the lax and careless proceedings of the procureur-général they saw, or fancied they saw, a desire on the part of Government to render the public uninterested spectators of the scene, and thus

prepare the way for an acquittal, while no danger of any excitement existed.

Such was the state of matters at the close of the fourth day. A tiresome and desultory discussion on some merely legal question had occupied the court for several hours, and many of the spectators, wearied and tired out, had gone home disappointed in their expectations, and secretly resolving not to return the following day.

This was the moment for which the party in power had been waiting—the interval of false security, as it would seem, when all danger was past, and no longer any apprehension existed. The sudden shock of the newly-discovered proofs would then come with peculiar force, while, no matter how rapid any subsequent step might be, all charge of precipitancy or undue haste had been disproved by the tardy nature of the first four days' proceedings.

For the change of scene about to take place an early edition of the *Moniteur* prepared the public; and by daybreak the walls of Paris were placarded with great announcements of the discoveries made by the Government—how, by their untiring efforts, the whole plot, which was to deluge France with blood, and subvert the glorious institutions of freedom they had acquired by the Revolution, had been laid open—new and convincing evidence of the guilt of the Chouans had turned up—and a frightful picture of anarchy and social disorganization was displayed, all of which was to originate in an effort to restore the Bourbons to the throne of France.

While, therefore, the galleries of the court were crowded to suffocation at an early hour, and every avenue leading to the tribunal crammed with people, anxious to be present at this eventful crisis, the prisoners took their places on the "bench of the accused," totally unaware of the reason of the excitement they witnessed, and strangely puzzled to conceive what unknown circumstance had reinvested the proceedings with a new interest.

As I took my place among the rest, I stared with surprise at the scene—the strange contrast between the thousands there whose strained eyes and feverish faces betokened the highest degree of excitement, and that little group on which every look was turned—calm, and even

cheerful. There sat George Cadoudal in the midst of them, his hands clasped in those at either side of him; his strongly-marked features perfectly at rest, and his eyes bent with a steady stare on the bench where the judges were seated. Moreau was not present, nor did I see some of the Chouans whom I remembered on the former day.

The usual formal proclamation of the court being made, silence was called by the crier—a useless precaution, as throughout that vast assembly not a whisper was to be heard. A conversation of some minutes took place between the Procureur and the counsel for the prisoners, in which I recognized the voice of Monsieur Baillot, my own advocate, which was interrupted by the President, desiring that the proceedings should commence.

The Procureur-Général bowed and took his seat, while the President, turning towards George, said,—

“George Cadoudal, you have hitherto persisted in a course of blank denial regarding every circumstance of the conspiracy with which you are charged. You have asserted your ignorance of persons and places with which we are provided with proof to show you are well acquainted. You have neither accounted for your presence in suspected situations, nor satisfactorily shown what were the objects of your intimacy with suspected individuals. The court now desires to ask you whether, at this stage of the proceedings, you wish to offer more explicit revelations, or explain any of the dubious events of your career?”

“I will answer any question you put to me,” replied George, sternly; “but I have lived too long in another country not to have learned some of its usages, and I feel no desire to become my own accuser. Let him there” (he pointed to the Procureur-Général) “do his office—he is the paid and salaried assailant of the innocent.”

“I call upon the court,” said the Procureur, rising, when he was suddenly interrupted by the President, saying, “We will protect you, Monsieur le Procureur. And once again we would admonish the accused, that insolence to the authorities of this court is but a sorry plea in vindication of his innocence, and shall be no recommendation to our mercy.”

“Your mercy!” said George, in a voice of scorn and sarcasm. “Who ever heard of a tiger’s benevolence or a

wolf's charity? And even if you wished it, he whose slaves you are——"

"I call upon you to be silent," said an advocate, rising from a bench directly behind him. "Another interruption of this kind, and I shall abandon the defence."

"What?" said George, turning quickly round and staring at him with a look of withering contempt, "and have they bought *you* over too?"

"Call the first witness," said the President, and an indistinct murmur was heard, and a slight confusion seen to agitate the crowd, as the gendarmes opened a path towards the witness bench; and then I saw two men carrying something between them, which I soon perceived to be a man. The legs, which were alone apparent, hung down listlessly like those of a corpse, and one arm, which fell over the shoulder of the bearer, moved to and fro, as they went, like the limb of a dead man. Every neck was stretched from the galleries above, and along the benches beneath, to catch a glimpse of the mysterious figure, which seemed like an apparition from the grave come to give evidence. His face, too, was concealed by a handkerchief; and as he was placed in a chair provided for the purpose, the assistants stood at either side to support his drooping figure.

"Let the witness be sworn," said the President; and, with the aid of an officer of the court, a thin white hand was held up, on which the flesh seemed almost transparent from emaciation. A low, muttering sound followed, and the President spoke again: "Let the witness be uncovered. George Cadoudal, advance!"

As the hardy Chouan stepped forward the handkerchief fell from the witness's face, while his head slowly turned round towards the prisoner. A cry, like the yell of a wounded animal, broke from the stout Breton, as he bounded into the air and held up both his arms to their full height. "*Toi, toi!*" screamed he, in accents that seemed the very last of a heart wrung to agony, while he leaned forward and fixed his eyes on him, till the very orbs seemed bursting from their sockets. "*Oui,*" added he, in a lower tone, but one which was felt in every corner of that crowded assemblage—"oui, c'est lui." Then clasping his trembling hands together, as his knees bent

beneath him, he turned his eyes upwards, and said, "*Le bon Dieu*, that make men's hearts and knows their thoughts, deals with us as He will; and I must have sinned sorely towards Him when such punishment as this has fallen upon me. Oh! my brother, my child, my own Bouvet de Lozier."

"Bouvet de Lozier!" cried the other prisoners, with a shout wild as madness itself, while every man sprang forward to look at him. But already his head had fallen back over the chair; the limbs stretched out rigidly, and the arm fell heavily down. "He is dying!" "He is dead!" were the exclamations of the crowd, and a general cry for a doctor was heard around. Several physicians were soon at his side, and by the aid of restoratives he was gradually brought back to animation, but cold and speechless he lay, unable to understand anything, and was obliged to be conveyed back again to his bed.

It was some time before the excitement of this harrowing scene was over; and when order at length was restored in the court, George Cadoudal was seen seated, as at first, on the bench, while around him his faithful followers were grouped. Like children round a beloved father, some leaned on his neck, others clasped his knees—some covered his hands with kisses, and called him by the most endearing names. But though he moved his head from side to side, and tried to smile upon them, a cold vacancy was in his face; his lips were parted, and his eyes stared wildly before him; his very hair stood out from his forehead, on which the big drops of sweat were seen.

"Father, dear father, it is but one who is false—see, look how many of your children are true to you—think on us who are with you here, and will go with you to death without shrinking."

"He is but a child, too, father, and they have stolen away his reason from him," said another.

"Yes, they have brought him to this by suffering," cried a third, as with a clenched hand he menaced the bench where sat the judges.

"Order in the court!" cried the President; but the command was reiterated again and again before silence

could be obtained; and when again I could observe the proceedings, I saw the Procureur-Général addressing the tribunal, to demand a postponement, in consequence of the illness of the last witness, whose testimony was pronounced all-conclusive.

A discussion took place on the subject between the counsel for the prisoners and the prosecution, and at length it was ruled that this trial should not be proceeded with till the following morning.

"We are, however, prepared to go on with the other cases," said the Procureur, "if the court will permit."

"Certainly," said the President.

"In that case," continued the Procureur, "we shall call on the accused Thomas Burke, lieutenant of the *huitième* hussars, now present." For some minutes nothing more could be heard, for the crowded galleries, thronged with expectant hundreds, began now to empty. Mine was a name without interest for any; and the thronged masses rose to depart, while their over-excited minds found vent in words which drowned all else. It was in vain silence and order were proclaimed—the proceedings had lost all interest, and with it all respect, and for full ten minutes the uproar lasted. Meanwhile, M. Baillot, taking his place by my side, produced some most voluminous papers, in which he soon became deeply engaged. I turned one look throughout the now almost deserted seats, but not one face there was known to me. The few who remained seemed to stay rather from indolence than any other motive, as they lounged over the vacant benches, and yawned listlessly; and much as I dreaded the gaze of that appalling multitude, I sickened at the miserable isolation of my lot, and felt overwhelmed to think that for me there was not one who should pity or regret my fall. At last order was established in the court, and the Procureur opened the proceeding by reciting the act of my accusation, in which all the circumstances already mentioned by my advocate were dwelt and commented on with the habitual force and exaggeration of bar oratory. The address was short, however—scarcely fifteen minutes long; and by the tone of the speaker, and the manner of the judges, I guessed that my case excited little or no interest to the prosecution, either

from my own humble and insignificant position, or the certainty they felt of my conviction.

My advocate rose to demand a delay—even a short one, pleading most energetically against the precipitancy of a proceeding in which the indictment was but made known the day previous. The President interrupted him roughly, and with an assurance that no circumstance short of the necessity to produce some important evidence not then forthcoming, would induce him to grant a postponement.

M. Baillot replied at once, "Such, sir, is our case; a witness, whose evidence is of the highest moment, is not to be found; a day or two might enable us to obtain his testimony; it is upon this we ground our hope, our certainty of an acquittal. The court will not, I am certain, refuse its clemency in such an emergency as this?"

"Where is this same witness to be found? Is he in Paris?—is he in France?"

"We hope in Paris, Monsieur le Président."

"And his name?"

"The Abbé d'Ervan."

A strange murmur ran along the bench of judges at the words, and I could see that some of them smiled in spite of their efforts to seem grave, while the Procureur-Général did not scruple to laugh outright.

"I believe, sir," said he, addressing the President, "that I can accommodate my learned brother with this so-much-desired testimony perhaps more speedily—I will not say than he wishes—but than he expects."

"How is this?" said my advocate, in a whisper to me; "they have this abbé then—has he turned against his party?"

"I know nothing of him," said I, recklessly; "falsehood and treachery seem so rife here, that it can well be as you say."

"The Abbé d'Ervan," cried a loud voice, and with the words the well-known figure moved rapidly from the crowd and mounted the steps of the platform.

"You are lost," said Baillot, in a low, solemn voice. "It is Mehée de la Touche himself!"

Had the words of my sentence rung in my ears I had not felt them more; that name, by some secret spell, had such terror in it.

"You know the prisoner before you, sir?" said the President, turning towards the abbé.

Before he could reply, my advocate broke in,—

"Pardon me, sir, but previous to the examination of this respectable witness, I would ask under what name he is to figure in this process? Is he here the Abbé d'Ervan, the agreeable and gifted frequenter of the Faubourg St. Germain?—is he the Chevalier Maupret, the companion and associate of the house of Bourbon?—or is he the no less celebrated and esteemed citizen Mehée de la Touche, whose active exertions have been of such value in these eventful times, that we should think no recompense sufficient for them, had he not been paid by both parties? Yes, sir," continued he, in an altered tone, "I repeat it, we are prepared to show that this man is unworthy of all credit; that he whose testimony the court now calls is a hired spy and bribed calumniator—the instigator to the treason he prosecutes—the designer of the schemes for which other men's blood has paid the penalty. Is this abbé without and gendarme within to be at large in the world, ensnaring the unsuspecting youth of France by subtle and insidious doctrines disguised under the semblance of after-dinner gaiety? Are we to feel that on such evidence as this, the fame, the honour, the life of every man is to rest? He who earns his livelihood by treason, and whose wealth is gathered in the bloody sawdust beneath the guillotine!"

"We shall not hear these observations longer," said the President, with an accent of severity. "You may comment on the evidence of the witness hereafter, and, if you are able to do so, disprove it. His character is under the protection of the court."

"No, sir," said the advocate, with energy, "no court, however high—no tribunal, beneath that of Heaven itself, whose decrees we dare not question—can throw a shield over a man like this. There are crimes which stain the nation they occur in—which, happening in our age, make men sorry for their generation, and wish they had lived in other times."

"Once more, sir, I command you to desist," interrupted the President.

"If I dare to dictate to the honourable court," said the

so-called abbé, in an accent of the most honeyed sweetness, and with a smile of the most winning expression, "I would ask permission for the learned gentleman to proceed. These well-arranged paragraphs, this indignation got by heart, must have vent, since they're paid for; and it would save the tribunal the time which must be consumed in listening to them hereafter."

"If," said the advocate, "the coolness and indifference to blood which the headsman exhibits, be a proof of guilt in the victim before him, I could congratulate the prosecution on their witness. But," cried he, in an accent of wild excitement, "great Heavens! are we again fallen on such times as to need atrocity like this? Is the terrible ordeal of blood through which we have passed to be renewed once more? Is the accusation to be hoarded, the calumnious evidence secreted, the charge held back, till the scaffold is ready—and then the indictment, the slander, the sentence, and the death to follow on one another like the flash and the thunder? Is the very imputation of having heard from a Bourbon to bear its prestige of sudden death?"

"Silence, sir," cried the President, to whom the allusion to the Duc d'Enghien was peculiarly offensive, and who saw in the looks of the spectators with what force it told. "You know the prisoner?" said he, turning towards D'Ervan.

"I have that honour, sir," said he, with a bland smile.

"State to the court the place and the occasion of your first meeting him."

"If I remember correctly, it was in the Palais Royal, at Beauvilliers's. There was a meeting of some of the Chouan party arranged for that evening, but from some accident only three or four were present. The sous-lieutenant, however, was one."

"Repeat, as far as your memory serves you, the conduct and conversation of the prisoner during the evening in question."

In reply, the abbé recapitulated every minute particular of the supper; scarcely an observation the most trivial he did not recall and apply, by some infernal ingenuity, to the scheme of the conspiracy. Although never, even in the slightest instance, falsifying any speech, he tortured the

shall pause here," said he, with a cool malignity, but ill concealed beneath a look of affected sorrow—"I shall pause here, and, with the permission of the court, allow the accused to make, if he will, a full confession of his criminality; or, if he refuse this, I shall proceed to the disclosure of other circumstances, by which it will be seen that these dark designs met favour and countenance in higher quarters, and among those, too, whose sex, if nothing else, should have removed them beyond the contamination of confederacy with assassination."

"The court," said the President, sternly, "will enter into no compromise of this kind. You are here to give such evidence as you possess—fully, frankly, and without reserve; nor can we permit you to hold out any promises to the prisoner that his confession of guilt can afford a screen to the culpability of others."

"I demand," cried the Procureur-Général, "a full disclosure from the witness of everything he knows concerning this conspiracy."

"In that case I shall speak," said the abbé.

At this instant a noise was heard in the hall without; a half murmur ran through the court; and suddenly the heavy curtain was drawn aside, and a loud voice called out,—

"In the name of the Republic—one and indivisible—an order of council."

The messenger, splashed and covered with mud, advanced through the court, and delivered a packet into the hands of the President, who, having broken the large seals, proceeded leisurely to read it over. At the same moment I felt my arm gently touched, and a small pencil note was slipped into my hand. It ran thus:—

"DEAR SIR,—Burke is safe. An order for his transmission before a military tribunal has just been signed by the First Consul. Stop all the evidence at once, as he is no longer before the court. The court-martial will be but a formality, and in a few days he will be at liberty.—Yours,

"D'AUVERGNE, Lieutenant-General."

Before I could recover from the shock of such glad tidings the President rose, and said,—

"In the matter of the accused Burke this court has no longer cognizance, as he is summoned before the tribunal of the army. Let him withdraw, and call on the next case, Auguste Leconisset."

D'Ervan stooped down and whispered a few words to the Procureur-Général, who immediately demanded to peruse the order of council. To this my advocate at once objected, and a short and animated discussion on the legal question followed. The President, however, ruled in favour of my defender; and at the same instant a corporal's guard appeared, into whose charge I was formally handed over, and marched from the court.

Such was the excited state of my mind—in such a confused whirl were all my faculties, that I knew nothing of what was passing around me; and save that I was ordered to mount into a carriage, and driven along at a rapid pace, I remembered no more. At length we reached the quay Voltaire, and entered the large square of the barrack. The tears burst out and ran down my cheeks, as I looked once more on the emblems of the career I loved. We stopped at the door of a large stone building, where two sentries were posted; and the moment after I found myself the occupant of a small barrack-room, in which, though under arrest, no feature of harsh confinement appeared, and from whose windows I could survey the movement of the troops in the court, and hear the sounds which for so many a day had been the most welcome to my existence.



CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"THE CUIRASSIER."

ALTHOUGH my arrest was continued with all its strictness, I never heard one word of my transmission before the military tribunal; and a fortnight elapsed, during which I passed through every stage of expectancy, doubt, and at last indifference; no tidings having ever reached me as to what fortune lay in store for me.

The gruff old invalid that carried my daily rations seemed but ill-disposed to afford me any information, even as to the common events without, and seldom made any other reply to my questioning than an erect position as if on parade, a military salute, and "*Connais pas, mon lieutenant*"—a phrase which I actually began to abhor from its repetition. Still his daily visits showed I was not utterly forgotten; while from my window I had a view of all that went on in the barrack-yard. There—for I had neither books nor newspapers—I spent my day watching the evolutions of the soldiers: the parade at daybreak, the relieving guards, the drill, the exercise, the very labours of the barrack-square—all had their interest for me, and at length I began to know the very faces of the soldiers, and could recognize the bronzed and weather-beaten features of the veterans of the republican armies.

It was a cuirassier regiment, and one that had seen much service: most of the *sous-officiers* and many of the men were decorated; and their helmets bore the haughty device of "*Dix contre un!*" in memory of some battle against the Austrians, where they repulsed and overthrew a force of ten times their own number.

At first their heavy equipments and huge unwieldy horses seemed strange and uncouth to my eyes, accustomed to the more elegant and trim style of a hussar corps, but gradually I fancied there was something almost more soldierlike about them; their dark faces harmonized too with the great black cuirass; and the large massive

boot mounting to the middle of the thigh, the long horse-haired helmet, the straight sword, and peculiar, heavy, plodding step, reminded me of what I used to read of the Roman centurion; while the horses, covered with weighty and massive trappings, moved with a warlike bearing, and a tramp as stately as their riders.

When evening came, and set the soldiers free from duty, I used to watch them for hours long, as they sat in little groups and knots about the barrack-yard, smoking and chatting—occasionally singing too. Even then, however, their distinctive character was preserved: unlike the noisy, boisterous merriment of the hussar, the staid cuirassier deemed such levity unbecoming the dignity of his arm of the service, and there reigned a half-solemn feature over all their intercourse, which struck me forcibly. I knew not then—as I have learned full well since—how every department of the French army had its distinctive characteristic, and that Napoleon studied and even encouraged the growth of these singular manners to a great extent; doubtless, too, feeling a pride in his own thorough intimacy with their most minute traits, and that facility with which, by a single word, he could address himself to the cherished feeling of a particular corps. And the tact by which the monarch wins over and fascinates the nobles of his court, was here exercised in the great world of a camp, and with far more success too: a phrase, a name, some well-known battle, the date of a victory, would fall from his lips as he rode along the line, and be caught up with enthusiasm by thousands, who felt in the one word a recognition of past services. "Thou"—he always addressed the soldiers in the second person—"thou wert with me at Cairo;" "I remember thee at Arcole," were enough to reward wounds, suffering, mutilation itself; and he to whom such was addressed became an object of veneration among his fellows.

Certain corps preserved more studiously than others the memories of past achievements—the heirlooms of their glory; and to these Bonaparte always spoke with a feeling of friendship most captivating to the soldier's heart, and from them he selected the various regiments that composed his "Guard." The cuirassiers belonged to this proud force; and even an unmilitary eye could mark, in

their haughty bearing and assured look, that they were a favoured corps.

Among those with whose faces I had now grown familiar there was one whom I regarded with unusual interest: he seemed to me the very type of his class. He was a man of gigantic size, towering by half a head above the very tallest of his fellows, while his enormous breadth of chest and shoulder actually seemed to detract from his great height. The lower part of his face was entirely concealed by a beard of bright red hair that fell in a huge mass over the breast of his cuirass, and seemed by its trim and fashion to be an object of no common pride to the wearer; his nose was marked by a sabre-cut that extended across one entire cheek, leaving a deep blue welt in its track; but saving these traits—wild and savage enough—the countenance was singularly mild and pleasing; he had large and liquid blue eyes, soft and lustrous as any girl's; the lashes, too, were long and falling; and his forehead, which was high and open, was white as snow. I was not long in remarking the strange influence this man seemed to possess over the rest—an ascendancy not in any way attributable to the mark on his sleeve, which proclaimed him a corporal. It seemed as though his slightest word, his least gesture, was attended to; and though evidently taciturn and quiet, when he spoke I could detect in his manner an air of promptitude and command that marked him as one born to be above his fellows. If he seemed such in the idle hours, on parade he was the *beau idéal* of a cuirassier. His great war-horse, seemingly small for the immense proportions of the heavy rider, bounded with each movement of his wrist, as if instinct with the horse-man's wishes.

I waited with some impatience for the invalid's arrival, to ask who this remarkable soldier was, certain that I should hear of no common man. He came soon after; and as I pointed out the object of my curiosity, the old fellow drew himself up with pride, and, while a grim effort at a smile crossed his features, replied,—

“That's Pioche—*le gros Pioche!*”

“Pioche!” said I, repeating the name aloud, and endeavouring to remember why it seemed well known to me.

“Yes, Pioche,” rejoined he, gruffly. “If Monsieur had

ever been in Egypt, the name would scarcely sound so strange in his ears.” And with this sarcasm he hobbled from the room and closed the door, while I could hear him grumbling along the entire corridor, in evident anger at the ignorance that did not know “*Pioche*.”

Twenty times did I repeat the name aloud, before it flashed across me as the same Madame Lefebvre mentioned at the *soirée* in the palace. It was *Pioche* who shouldered the brass field-piece, and passed before the general on parade. The gigantic size, the powerful strength, the strange name—all could belong to no other; and I felt as though at once I had found an old acquaintance in the great cuirassier of the Guard.

If the prisoner in his lonely cell has few incidents to charm his solitary hours, in return he is enabled by some happy gift to make these the sources of many thoughts. The gleam of light that falls upon the floor, broken by the iron gratings of his window, comes laden with storied fancies of other lands—of far-distant countries where men are dwelling in their native mountains free and happy; forgetful of his prison, the captive wanders in his fancy through valleys he has seen in boyhood, and with friends to be met no more. He turns gladly to the past, of whose pleasures no adverse fortune can deprive him, and lives over again the happy hours of his youth; and thinks, with a melancholy not devoid of its own pleasure, of what *they* would feel who loved him, could they but see him now. He pictures *their* sympathy and *their* sorrow, and his heart feels lighter, though his eyes drop tears.

In this way the great cuirassier became an object for my thoughts by day and my dreams by night. I fancied a hundred stories of which he was the hero; and these imaginings served to while away many a tedious hour, and gave me an interest in watching the little spot of earth that was visible from my barred window. It was in one of these reveries I sat one evening, when I heard the sounds of feet approaching along the corridor that led to my room; the clank of a sabre and the jingle of spurs sounded not like my gruff visitor. My door was opened before I had time for much conjecture, and General D’Auvergne stood before me.

“*Ah! mon lieutenant,*” cried he, gaily, “you have been

thinking very hardly of me since we met last, I'm sure; charging me with forgetfulness, and accusing me of great neglect."

"Pardon me, general," said I, hurriedly; "your former kindness, for which I never can be grateful enough, has been always before my mind. I have not yet forgotten that you saved my life; more still—you rescued my name from dishonour."

"Well, well; that's all past and gone now. Your reputation stands clear at last. De Beauvais has surrendered himself to the authorities at Rouen, and made a full confession of everything, exculpating you completely in every particular, save the indiscretion of your intercourse with Mehée de la Touche—or, as you know him better, the *Ablé d'Ervan*."

"And poor De Beauvais, what is to become of him?" said I, eagerly.

"Have no fears on his account," said he, with something like confusion in his manner; "she—that is, Madame Bonaparte—has kindly interested herself in his behalf, and he is to sail for Guadaloupe in a few days—his own proposition and wish."

"And does General Bonaparte know now that I was guiltless?" cried I, with enthusiasm.

"My dear young man," said he, with a bland smile, "I very much fear that the general has little time at this moment to give the matter much of his attention. Great events have happened—are happening while we speak. War is threatening on the side of Austria. Yes, it is true; the camp of Boulogne have received orders to break up; troops are once more on their march to the Rhine; all France is arming."

"Oh, when I shall be free?"

"You are free!" cried he, clapping me gaily on the shoulder. "An amnesty against all untried prisoners for state offences has been proclaimed. At such a moment of national joy——"

"What do you mean?"

"What! and have I not told you my great news? The senate have presented to Bonaparte an address, praying his acceptance of the throne of France—or, in their very words, to make his authority eternal."

“And he?” said I, breathless with impatience to know the result.

“He,” continued the general, “has replied as became him, desiring them to state clearly their views—by what steps they propose to consolidate the acquired liberties of the nation; and while avowing that no higher honour or dignity can await him than such as he has already received at the hands of the people—‘Yet,’ added he, ‘when the hour arrives that I can see such to be the will of France, when one voice proclaims it from Alsace to the Ocean—from Lisle to the Pyrenees, then shall I be ready to accept the throne of France.’”

The general entered minutely into all the circumstances of the great political change, and detailed the effect which the late conspiracy had had on the minds of the people, and with what terror they contemplated the social disorders that must accrue from the death of their great ruler; how nothing short of a government based on a monarchy, with the right of succession established, could withstand such a terrific crisis. As he spoke, the words I had heard in the Temple crossed my mind, and I remembered that such was the anticipation of the prisoners, as they said among themselves, “When the guillotine has done its work, they’ll patch up the timbers into a throne.”

“And George Cadoudal and the others?” said I.

“They are no more. Betrayed by their own party, they met death like brave men, and as worthy of a better cause. But let us not turn to so sad a theme. The order for your liberation will be here to-morrow; and as I am appointed to a brigade on active service, I have come to offer you the post of aide-de-camp.”

I could not speak; my heart was too full for words. I knew how great the risk of showing any favour to one who stood in such a position as I did, and I could but look my gratitude, while the tears ran down my cheeks.

“Well,” cried he, as he took my hand in his, “so much is settled. Now to another point, and one in which my frankness must cause you no offence. You are not rich—neither am I; but Bonaparte always gives us opportunities to gather our epaulettes—ay, and find the bullion to make them, too. Meanwhile, you may want money——”

“No, general,” cried I, eagerly; “here are three thou-

sand francs some kind friend sent me. I know not whence they came; and even if I wanted, did not dare to spend them; but now——"

The old man paused, and appeared confused, while he leaned his finger on his forehead, and seemed endeavouring to recall some passing thought.

"Did they come from you, sir?" said I, timidly.

"No, not from me," repeated he, slowly. "You say you never found out the donor?"

"Never," said I, while a sense of shame prevented my adding what rose to my mind—Could they not be from Mademoiselle de Meudon?

"Well, well," said he, at length, "be it so. And now till to-morrow: I shall be here at noon, and bring the minister's order with me. And so, good-bye."

"Good-bye," said I, as I stood overcome with happiness. "Let what will come of it, this is a moment worth living for."



CHAPTER XXXIX.

A MORNING AT "THE TUILERIES."

TRUE to his appointment, the general appeared the following day as the hour of noon was striking. He brought the official papers from the minister of war, as well as the formal letter naming me his aide-de-camp. The documents were all perfectly regular, and being read over by the military commission, I was sent for, when my sword was restored to me by the colonel of the regiment in garrison, and I was free once more.

"You have received a severe lesson, Burke," said the general, as he took my arm to lead me towards his carriage, "and all owing to the rashness with which, in times of difficulty and danger, you permitted yourself to form intimacies with men utterly unknown to you. There are epochs when weakness is the worst of evils. You are very young, to be sure, and I trust the experience you have acquired here will serve for a lifetime."

"Still, sir, in all this sad business, my faith never wavered; my attachment to the Consul was unshaken."

"Had it been otherwise, do you think you had been here now?" said he, dryly. "Were not the evidences of your fidelity set off against your folly, what chance of escape remained for you? No, no; she who befriended you so steadily throughout this tangled scheme for your ruin, had never advocated your cause were there reason to suppose you were involved in the conspiracy against her husband's life."

"Who do you mean?" said I. "I scarcely understand."

"The Consulesse, of course. But for Madame Bonaparte you were lost; even since I saw you last, I have learned how deeply interested she became in your fortunes. The letter you received in the Temple came from her, and

the enclosure also. And now, with your leave, we can do nothing better than pay our respects to her, and make our acknowledgments for such kindness. She receives at this hour, and will, I know, take your visit in good part."

While I professed my readiness to comply with the suggestion, we drove into the court of the Tuileries. It was so early that, except the officers of the Consul's staff, and some of those on guard, we were the only persons visible.

"We are the first arrivals," said the general, as we drew up at the door of the pavilion. "I am not sorry for it; we shall have our audience over before the crowd assembles."

Giving our names to the usher, we mounted the stairs, and passed on from room to room until we came to a large *salon*, in which seats were formally arranged in a semi-circle, an arm-chair somewhat higher than the rest occupying the centre. Several full-length portraits of the generals of the revolutionary armies adorned the walls, and a striking likeness of the Consul himself, on horseback, held the principal place. I had but time to see thus much, when the two sides of the folding-doors were flung open, and Madame Bonaparte, followed by Mademoiselle de Meudon, entered. Scarcely were the doors closed, when she said, smiling,—

"I heard of your arrival, general, and guessed its purport, so came at once. Monsieur Burke, I am happy to see you at liberty once more."

"That I owe it to you, madame, makes it doubly dear to me," said I, faltering.

"You must not overrate my exertions on your behalf," replied the Consulesse, in a hurried voice. "There was an *amende* due to you for the treatment you met with at Versailles—all Savary's fault; and now I am sincerely sorry I ever suffered myself to become a party to his schemes. Indeed, I never guessed them, or I should not. General d'Auvergne has made you his aide-de-camp, he tells me."

"Yes, madame; my good fortune has showered favours on me most suddenly. Your kindness has been an augury of success in everything."

She smiled, as if pleased, and then said, "I have a piece

of advice to give you, and hope you'll profit by it." Then, turning towards the general, who all this time was deeply engaged in talking to Mademoiselle de Meudon, she added, "Don't you think, general, that it were as well Monsieur Burke should not be in the way of meeting the Consul for some short time to come. Is there any garrison duty, or any service away from Paris, where, for a week or so, he could remain?"

"I have thought of that, madame," said the general. "Two of the regiments in my brigade are to march tomorrow for the east of France, and I intend my young friend to proceed to Strasbourg at once."

"This is not meant for banishment," said she to me, with a look of much sweetness; "but Bonaparte will now and then say a severe thing, likely to dwell in the mind of him to whom it was addressed long after the sentiment which dictated it has departed. A little time will efface all memory of this sad affair, and then we shall be happy to see you here again."

"Or events may happen soon, madame, by which he may make his own peace with General Bonaparte."

"True, very true," said she, gravely. "And as to that, general, what advices are there from Vienna?"

She drew the general aside into one of the windows, leaving me alone with Mademoiselle de Meudon. But a minute before, and I had given the world for such an opportunity, and now I could not speak a syllable. She, too, seemed equally confused, and bent over a large vase of moss-roses, as if totally occupied by their arrangement. I drew nearer, and endeavoured to address her, but the words would not come, while a hundred gushing thoughts pressed on me, and my heart beat loud enough for me to hear it. At last I saw her lips move, and thought I heard my name; I bent down my head lower; it was her voice, but so low as to be scarcely audible.

"I cannot thank you, sir, as I could wish," said she, "for the service you rendered me, at the risk of your own life and honour. And though I knew not the dangers you were to incur by my request, I asked it as of the only one I knew who would brave such danger at my asking." She paused for a second, then continued: "The friend of Charles could not but be the friend of Marie de Meudon."

There is now another favour I would beg at your hands," said she, while a livid paleness overspread her features.

"Oh, name it!" said I, passionately. "Say, how can I serve you?"

"It is this," said she, with an accent whose solemnity sank into the very recesses of my heart: "We have ever been an unlucky race. De Meudon is but a name for misfortune; not only have we met little else in our own lives, but all who have befriended us have paid the penalty of their friendship. My dear brother knew this well; and I——." She paused, and then, though her lips moved, the words that followed were inaudible. "There is but one on earth," continued she, as her eyes, brimful of tears, were turned towards Madame Bonaparte, who still stood talking in the window, "over whose fortunes my affection has thrown no blight. Heaven grant it may be ever so!" Then suddenly, as if remembering herself, she added: "What I would ask is this—that we should meet no more. Nay, nay, look not so harshly at me. If I, alone in the world, ask to be deprived of his friendship who loved my brother so——"

"Oh! if you be alone in the world, feel for one like me, who has not even a country he can call his own. Take not the one hope from my heart, I ask you. Leave me the thought that there is one, but one, in all this land, to whom my name, if ever mentioned with praise, can bring one moment's pleasure—who can say 'I knew him.' Do not forget that Charles, with his dying breath, said you would be my sister."

The door of the *salon* opened suddenly, and a name was announced, but in my confusion I heard not what. Madame Bonaparte, however, advanced towards the new arrival with an air of welcome, as she said,—

"We were just wishing for you, general. Pray tell us all the news of Paris."

The person thus addressed was a very tall and singularly handsome man, whose dark eyes, and dark whiskers meeting in the middle of his chin, gave him the appearance of an Italian. He was dressed in a hussar uniform, whose gorgeous braiding of gold was heightened in effect by a blaze of orders and stars that covered the entire breast; the scarlet pantaloons, tight to the leg, displayed to advan-

tage the perfect symmetry of his form, while his boots of yellow morocco, bound and tasselled with gold, seemed the very coquetry of military costume. A sabre, the hilt actually covered with precious stones, clanked at his side; and the *aigrette* of his plumed hat was a large diamond. There was something almost theatrical in the manner of his approach, as with a stately step and a deep bow he took Madame Bonaparte's hand and kissed it; a ceremony he repeated to Mademoiselle de Moudon, adding, as he did so,—

"And my fair *Rose de Provence*—more beautiful than ever!—how is she?"

"What flattery is he whispering, Marie?" said the Consulesse, laughing. "Don't you know, general, that I insist on all the compliments here being paid to myself. What do you think of my robe?—your judgment is said to be perfect."

"Charming—absolutely charming!" said he, in an attitude of affected admiration. "It is only such taste as yours could have devised anything so beautiful. Yet the roses—I half think I should have preferred them white."

"You can scarcely imagine that vain fellow with the long ringlets the boldest soldier of the French army," said the general, in a low whisper, as he drew me to one side.

"Indeed! And who is he, then?"

"You a hussar, and not know him! Why, Murat, to be sure."

"So then, madame, all my news of Monsieur Talleyrand's ball, it seems, is stale already. You've heard that the Russian and Austrian ministers both sent apologies?"

"Oh dear!" said she, sighing; "have I not heard it a thousand times, and every reason for it canvassed, until I wished both of their excellencies at—at Madame Lefebvre's dinner-party?"

"That was perfect," cried Murat, aloud; "a regular bivouac in a *salon*. You'd think that the silver dishes and the gilt candelabras had just been captured from the enemy, and that the cuisine was made by beat of drum."

"The general is an honest man and a brave officer," said D'Auvergne, somewhat nettled at the tone Murat spoke in.

"No small boast either," replied the other, shrugging

his shoulders carelessly, "in the times and the land we live in."

"And what of Cambacérès's soirée—how did it go off?" interposed Madame Bonaparte, anxious to relieve the awkward pause that followed.

"Like everything in his hotel—sombre, stately, and stupid; the company all dull, who would be agreeable everywhere else; the tone of the reception laboured and affected, and every one dying to get away to Fouché's. It was his second night for receiving."

"Was that pleasanter, then?"

"A hundred times. There are no parties like his—one meets everybody. It is a kind of neutral territory for the Faubourg and the Jacobin—the partisan of our people, and the followers of Heaven knows who. Fouché slips about, whispering the same anecdote in confidence to every one, and binding each to secrecy. Then, as every one comes there to spy his neighbour, the host has an excellent opportunity of pumping all in turn; and while they all persist in telling him nothing but lies, they forget that with him no readier road could lead to the detection of truth."

"The Consul!" said a servant, aloud, as the door opened and closed with a crash, and Bonaparte, dressed in the uniform of the Chasseurs of the Guard, and covered with dust, entered.

"Was Decrès here?" And then, without waiting for a reply, continued—"It is settled—all finally arranged; I told you, madame, the 'pear was ripe.' I start to-morrow for Boulogne. You, Murat, must accompany me; D'Auvergne, your division will march the day after. Who is this gentleman?"

This latter question, in all its abruptness, was addressed to me, while a dark and ominous frown settled on his features.

"My aide-de-camp, sir," said the old general, hastily, hoping thus to escape further inquiry.

"Your name, sir?" said the Consul, harshly, as he fixed his piercing eyes upon me.

"Burke, sir; sous-lieutenant——"

"Of the 8th Hussars," continued he. "I know the rest, sir. Every conspiracy is made up of knaves and fools;

you figured in the latter capacity. Mark me, sir, your name is yet to make; the time is approaching when you may have the opportunity; still, General d'Auvergne, it is not in the ranks of a Chouan plot I should have gone to select my staff."

"Pardon me, sir; but this young man's devotion to you——"

"Is on record, general; I have seen it in Mehée de la Touche's own writing," added Bonaparte, with a sneer. "Give me the fidelity, sir, that has no tarnish—like your own, D'Auvergne. Go, sir," said he, turning to me, while he waved his hand towards the door. "It will need all your bravery and all your heroism to make me acquit General d'Auvergne of an act of folly."

I hung my head in shame, and with a low reverence and a tottering step moved from the room and closed the door behind me.

I had just reached the street when the general overtook me.

"Come, come, Burke," said he, "you must not mind this. I heard Lannes receive a heavier reproof, because he only carried away three guns of an Austrian battery, when there were four in all."

"Bonaparte never forgets, sir," muttered I, between my teeth, as the well-remembered phrase crossed my mind.

"Then there's but one thing to do, my boy; give him a pleasanter *souvenir* to look back upon. Besides," added he, in a lower tone, "the general is ever harsh at the moment of victory; and such is the present. In a few days more, France will have an emperor; the Senate has declared, and the army wait but for the signal to salute their monarch. And now for your own duties. Make your arrangements to start to-night by post for Mayence; I shall join you there in about ten days. You are, on your arrival, to report yourself to the general in command, and receive your instructions from him. A great movement towards the Rhine is in contemplation, but, of course, everything awaits the progress of political changes in Paris."

Thus conversing, we reached the corner of the Rue de Rohan, where the general's quarters were.

"You'll be here then punctually at eight to-night," said he; and we parted.

I walked on for some time without knowing which way I went, the strange conflict of my mind so completely absorbed me—hope and fear, pride, shame, and sorrow alternately swaying me with their impulses. I noticed not the gay and splendid streets through which I passed, nor the merry groups which poured along. At length I remembered that but a few hours remained for me to make some purchases necessary for my journey. My new uniform as aide-de-camp, too, was yet to be ordered; and by some strange hazard I was exactly at the corner of the Rue de Richelieu on the Boulevard, at the very shop of Monsieur Crillac, where, some months before, began the singular current of ill-luck that had followed me ever since. A half-shudder of fear passed across me for a second as I thought of all the dangers I had gone through, and the next moment I felt ashamed of my cowardice, and pushing the glass door before me, walked in. I looked about me for the well-known face of the proprietor, but he was nowhere to be seen. A lean and wasted little old man, hung round with tapes and measures, was the only person there. Saluting me with a most respectful bow, he asked my orders.

"I thought this was Crillac's," said I, hesitatingly.

A shrug of the shoulders and a strange expression of the eyebrows was the only reply.

"I remember he lived here some eight or ten months ago," said I again, curious to find out the meaning of the man's ignorance of his predecessor.

"Monsieur has been away from Paris for some time then?" was the cautious question of the little man, as he peered curiously at me.

"Yes; I have been away," said I, after a pause.

"Monsieur knew Crillac probably when he was here?"

"I never saw him but once," said I.

"Ha!" cried he, after a long silence. "Then you probably never heard of the Chouan conspiracy to murder the Chief Consul and overthrow the Government, nor of their trial at the Palais de Justice?"

I nodded slightly, and he went on.

"Monsieur Crillac's evidence was of great value in the

proceeding : he knew Jules de Polignac and Charles de la Rivière well ; and but for him, San Victor would have escaped."

"And what has become of him since ?"

"He is gone back to the south ; he has been promoted."

"Promoted !—what do you mean ?"

"*Parbleu!* it is easy enough to understand. He was made *chef de bureau* in the department of——"

"What! was he not a tailor then ?"

"A tailor!—no," said the little man, laughing heartily, "he was a *mouchard*, a police spy, who knew all the royalist party well at Bordeaux, and Fouché brought him up here to Paris, and established him in this house. Ah, *mon Dieu!*" said he, sighing, "he had a better and a pleasanter occupation than cutting out pantaloons."

Without heeding the reiterated professions of the little tailor of his desire for my patronage, I strolled out again, lost in reflection, and sick to the heart of a system based on such duplicity and deception.

* * * * *

At last in Mayence. What a change of life was this to me ! A large fortress garrisoned by twelve thousand men, principally artillery, awaited here the orders of the Consul ; but whither the destination before them, or what the hour when the word to march was to summon them, none could tell. Meanwhile the activity of the troops was studiously kept up ; battering trains of field artillery were exercised day after day ; the men were practised in all the movements of the field ; while the foundries were unceasingly occupied in casting guns, and the furnaces rolled forth their myriads of shell and shot. Staff officers came and went ; expresses arrived from Paris, and orderlies, travel-stained and tired, galloped in from the other fortified places near, but still no whisper came to say where the great game of war was to open—for what quarter of the globe the terrible carnage was destined. From daylight till dark no moment of our time was unoccupied : reports innumerable were to be furnished on every possible subject, and frequently it was far in the night ere I returned to rest. To others this unbroken monotony may have been wearisome and uninteresting ; to me each incident

bore upon the great cause I gloried in; the dull rumble of the caissons, the heavy clattering of the brass guns, were music to my ear, and I never wearied of the din and clamour that spoke of preparation. Such was indeed the preoccupation of my thoughts, that I scarcely marked the course of events which were even then passing, or the mighty changes that already moved across the destinies of France. To my eyes the conqueror of Lodi needed no title—what sceptre could equal his own sword? France might desire in her pride to unite her destinies with such a name as his, but he, the general of Italy and Egypt, could not be exalted by any dignity. Such were my boyish fancies, and, as I indulged them, again there grew up the hope within me that a brighter day was yet to beam on my own fortunes, when I should do that which even in his eyes might seem worthy. His very reproaches stirred my courage and nerved my heart. There was a combat—there was a battle-field before me, in which my whole fame and honour lay; and could I but succeed in making him confess that he had wronged me, what pride was in the thought. "Yes," said I, again and again, "a devotion to him such as I can offer must have success: one who, like me, has neither home, nor friends, nor country, to share his heart, must have room in it for one passion, and that shall be glory. She whom alone I could have loved—I dared not confess I did love her—never could be mine. Life must have its object, and what so noble as that before me." My very dreams caught up the infatuation of my waking thoughts—and images of battle, deadly contests, and terrific skirmishes were constantly passing before me; and I actually went my daily rounds of duty buried in these thoughts, and lost to everything save what ministered to my excited imagination.

We who lived far away on the distant frontier could but collect from the journals the state of excitement and enthusiasm into which every class of the capital was thrown by Napoleon's elevation to the monarchy. Never, perhaps, in any country, did the current of popular favour run in a stream so united. The army hailed him as their brother of the sword, and felt the proud distinction that the chief of the Empire was chosen from their ranks. The civilian saw the restoration of monarchy as the pledge

of that security which alone was wanting to consolidate national prosperity. The clergy, however they may have distrusted his sincerity, could not but acknowledge that to his influence was owing the return of the ancient faith; and, save the Vendéans, broken and discomfited, and the scattered remnants of the Jacobin party, discouraged by the fate of Moreau, none raised a voice against him. A few of the old Republicans, among whom was Carnot, did, it is true, proclaim their dissent; but so moderately, and with so little of partisan spirit, as to call forth a eulogium on their honourable conduct from Napoleon himself.

The mighty change which was to undo all the long and arduous struggles for liberty, which took years in their accomplishment, was effected in one burst of national enthusiasm. Surrounded by nations on whose friendship they dared not reckon, at war with their most powerful enemy, England, France saw herself dependent on the genius of one great man; and beheld, too, the formidable conspiracy for his assassination, coupled with the schemes against her own independence. He became thus indissolubly linked with her fortunes—self-interest and gratitude pointed both in the same direction to secure his services; and the imperial crown was, indeed, less the reward of the past, than the price of the future. Even they who loved him least, felt that in his guidance there was safety; and that, without him, the prospect was dark, and dreary, and threatening. Another element which greatly contributed to the same effect, was the social ruin caused by the Revolution; the destruction of all commerce, the forfeiture of property, had thrown every class into the service of the Government. Men gladly advocated a change by which the ancient forms of a monarchy might be restored, and with them the long train of patronage and appointments, their inevitable attendants. Even the old families of the kingdom hailed the return of an order of things which might include them in the favours of the Crown; and the question now was, what rank or class should be foremost in tendering their allegiance to the new sovereign. We should hesitate ere we condemn the sudden impulse by which many were driven at this period. Confiscation and exile had done much to break the spirit

of even the hardest; and the very return to the institutions in which all their ancient prejudices were involved, seemed a pledge against the tyranny of the mass.

As for Napoleon himself, each step in his proud career seemed to evoke the spirit necessary to direct it—the resources of his mighty intellect appeared with every new drain on them, only the more inexhaustible. Animated through his whole life by the one great principle, the aggrandizement of France—his vast intelligence gathering strength with his own increase of power, enabled him to cultivate every element of national greatness, and mould their energies to his will, till at length the nation seemed but one vast body, of which he was the heart, the impulse, that sent the life-blood bounding through all its arteries, and with whose beating pulses every, even the most remote portion, throbbed in unison.

The same day that established the Empire, declared the rank and dignity accorded to each member of the royal family, with the titles to be borne by the ministers and other high officers of the Crown. The next step was the creation of a new order of nobility—one which, without ancient lineage or vast possessions, could still command the respect and admiration of all—the marshals of France. The names of Berthier, Murat, Augereau, Masséna, Bernadotte, Ney, Soult, Lannes, Mortier, Davoust, Bessières, were enough to throw a blaze of lustre on the order; and had it not been for the omission of Macdonald's name in this glorious list, public enthusiasm had been complete; but then he was the friend of Moreau, and Bonaparte "did not forgive."

The restoration of the old titles, so long in abeyance, the return to the pomp and state of monarchy, seemed like a national fête, and Paris became the scene of a splendid festivity and a magnificence unknown for many years past. It was necessary for the new Court to make its impression on the world, and the endeavour was to eclipse, by luxury and splendour, the grandeur which, in the days of the Bourbons, was an heirloom of royalty. To this end functionaries and officers of the palace were appointed in myriads—brilliant and costly uniforms adopted—courtly titles and ceremonial observances increased without end—and etiquette, carried to a pitch of

strictness which no former reign had ever exhibited, now regulated every department of the state.

While, however, nothing was too minute or too trivial, provided that it bore, even in the remotest way, on the re-establishment of that throne he had so long and so ardently desired, Napoleon's great mind was eagerly bent upon the necessity of giving to the Empire one of those astounding evidences of his genius, which marked him as above all other men. He wished to show to France that the crown had devolved upon the rightful successor to Charlemagne, and to prove to the army that the purple mantle of royalty could not conceal the spur of the warrior; and thus, while all believed him occupied with the ordinary routine of the period, his ambitious thoughts were carrying him away across the Pyrenees, or beyond the Danube, to battle-fields of even greater glory than ever, and to conquests prouder than all his former ones.

The same power of concentrativeness that he so eminently possessed himself, he imparted, as if by magic, to his government. Paris was France. To the capital flocked all whose talent or zeal prompted them to seek for advancement. The Emperor was not only the fountain of all honour, but of all emolument and place. No patronage was exercised without his permission, and none was conferred without the conviction that some staunch adherent was secured, whose friendship was ratified, or whose former enmity was conciliated.

Thus passed the year that followed his accession to the throne—that brilliant pageant of a nation's enthusiasm rendering tribute to the majesty of intellect. At length the period of inaction seemed drawing to a close; and a greater activity in the war department, and a new levy of troops, betokened the approach of some more energetic measures. Men whispered that the English expedition was about to sail, and reinforcements of ammunition and artillery were despatched to the coast; when suddenly came the news of Trafalgar: Villeneuve was beaten—his fleet annihilated—the whole combination of events destroyed—and England, again triumphant on the element she had made her own, hurled defiance at the threats of her enemy. The same despatch that brought the intelligence to Mayence told us to be in readiness for a move-

ment, but when, or where to, none of us could surmise. Still detachments from various corps stationed about were marched into the garrison, skeleton regiments commanded to make up their deficiencies, and a renewed energy was everywhere perceptible. At last, towards the middle of August, I was sent for by the general in command of the fortress, and informed that General d'Auvergne had been promoted to the command of a cavalry brigade stationed at Coblenz.

"You are to join him there immediately," continued he; but here is a note from himself, which probably will explain everything."

And with that he handed me a small sealed letter. It was the first, save on purely regimental matters, I had ever received from him, and somehow I felt unusually anxious about its contents. It ran in these words:—

"MY DEAR B.,—His Majesty has just sent for me, and, most graciously esteeming me not yet too old to serve him, has given me the command of a brigade—late the 12th, now to be called 'D'Auvergne's Cavalry.' I would willingly have mentioned your name for promotion, to which your zeal and activity would well entitle you, but deemed it better to let your claim come before the Emperor's personal notice—which an opportunity will, I trust, soon permit of its doing. His Majesty, with a kindness which the devotion of a life could not repay, has also interested himself personally for me in a quarter where only his influence could have proved successful—but the explanation of this I reserve for your arrival. And now I request that you will lose no time in repairing to Paris—where I shall expect to see you by Tuesday.

"Yours,

"D'AUVERGNE, Lieut.-General."

This strange paragraph puzzled me not a little; nor could I, by any exercise of ingenuity, find out even a plausible meaning for it. I read it over and over, weighing and canvassing every word, and torturing each syllable—but all to no purpose. Had the general been some youth-

ful but unhappy lover, to forward whose suit the Emperor had lent his influence, then had I understood the allusion; but with the old weather-beaten officer, whose hairs were blanched with years and service, the very thought of such a thing was too absurd. Yet what could be the royal favour so lavishly praised: he needed no intercession with the Empress—at least I remembered well how marked the kindness of Josephine was towards him in former times. But to what use guessing? Thoughts, by long revolving, often become only the more entangled, and we lose sight of the real difficulty in canvassing our own impressions concerning it. And so from this text did I spin away a hundred fancies that occupied me the whole road to Paris, nor left me till the din and movement of the great capital banished all other reflections.

Arrangement had been made for my reception at the Rue de Rohan, but I learned that the general was at Versailles with the Court, and only came up to Paris once or twice each week. His direction to me was, to wait for his arrival, and not to leave the city on any account.

With what a strange feeling did I survey the Palace of the Tuileries—the scene of my first moment of delighted admiration of her I now loved—and, alas! of my first step in the long catalogue of my misfortunes. I lingered about the gardens with a fascination I could not account for; my destiny seemed somehow linked with the spot, and I could not reason myself out of the notion but that there, in that great pile, the fate of my whole life was to be decided.

My entire day was passed in this way, and evening found me seated on one of the benches near the windows of the pavilion, where I watched the lustres in the long gallery as one by one they burst into light, and saw the gilt candelabras twinkling as each taper was illuminated. It was an evening reception of the Emperor, and I could mark the vast assemblage, in every variety of uniform, that filled the *salons*. At length the drums beat for strangers to leave the gardens, the patrols passed on, and gradually the crowded walks became thinner and thinner, the sounds of the drum grew fainter, and finally the whole space became still and noiseless; not a voice was to be heard, not a step moved on the gravel. I knew that the

gates were now locked, and yet I stayed on, glad to be alone, and at leisure to dream away among the fancies that kept ever rising to my mind, and to follow out the trains of thought that ever and anon opened before me.

As the hour grew later, and the *salons* filled more and more, the windows were opened along the terrace to give air, and I could hear the continued murmur of hundreds of voices conversing, while at times the sound of laughter rose above the rest. What a rush of thoughts came on me as I sat; how did I picture to myself the dark intrigues, the subtle plots of wily diplomatists, the bold and daring aspirations of the brave soldiers, the high hopes, and the ambitious yearnings, that were all commingled there, grouped around him whose dreams were of universal empire. While I mused, the night glided on, and the solemn sound of the bell of Notre Dame proclaimed midnight. I now could mark that the *salons* were thinning, and the unceasing din of carriages in the "place" announced the departure of the guests. In little more than half an hour the great gallery was empty, and but a few groups remained in the apartments adjoining; even they soon departed, and then I could see the servants passing from room to room extinguishing the lights, and soon the great façade of the palace was wrapped in darkness: a twinkling light appeared here and there for some time, but it too went out. The night was calm, and still, and sultry; not a leaf stirred, and the heavy tread of the sentinels, as they paced the marble vestibule, was heard plainly where I stood.

How full of thought to me was that vast pile, now shrouded in the gloom of night. What bold, ambitious deeds—what dreams of empire—had not been conceived there! The great of other days, indeed, entered little into my mind, as I remembered it was the home of him, the greatest of them all. How terrible, too, it was to think, that within that silent palace, which seemed sleeping with the tranquil quiet of an humble cottage, the dreadful plans which were to convulse the world, to shake thrones and dynasties, to make of Europe a vast battle-field, were now devising. The masses of dark cloud that hung heavily in the air, obscuring the sky, and shutting out every star, seemed to my fevered imagination an

augury of evil; and the oppressive, loaded atmosphere, though perfumed with the odour of flowers, sunk heavily on the spirits. Again the hour rang out, and I remembered that the gates of the garden were now closed for the night, and that I should remain where I was till daylight liberated me. My mind was, however, too full of its own thoughts to make me care for sleep, and I strolled along the gloomy walks lost in reverie.



CHAPTER XL.

A NIGHT IN THE TUILERIES GARDENS.

As the night wore on, I remembered that once, when a boy at the Polytechnique, I longed to penetrate one of the little enclosures which fenced the small flower-gardens beside the palace, and which were railed up from the public promenades by a low iron railing. The bouquets of rich flowers that grew there, sparkling with the light dew of a little *jet d'eau* that fell in rain-drops over them, had often tempted my young heart; but still, in the daytime, such a transgression would have been immediately punished. Now, with the strange caprice which so often prompts us in after years to do that which in youth we wished, but could not accomplish, I wandered towards the gardens, and crossing over the low fence, entered the parterre: each step awoke the sleeping perfume of the flowers, and I strolled along the velvet turf until I reached a low bench, half covered with honeysuckle and woodbine. Here I threw myself down, and, wrapping my cloak around me, resolved to rest till daybreak. The stillness of all around, the balmy air, and my own musings, gradually conspired to make me drowsy, and I slept.

My sleep could not have been long, when I was awakened by a noise close beside me. I started up and

looked about, and for some seconds I could scarcely credit that I was not still dreaming. Not more than a dozen paces from where I lay, and where before the dark walls of the palace rose in unbroken blackness, was now a chamber, brilliantly lighted up by several wax-lights that stood on a table. At the window, which opened to the ground, and led into the garden, stood the figure of a man, but from his position before the light I could not remark more than that he wore epaulettes. It was the noise of the opening jalousies which awoke me; and I could see his hand stretched out, as if to ascertain whether or not it was raining. At the table I could perceive another person, on whose uniform the light fell strongly, displaying many a cross and star, which twinkled with every stir he made. He was busily engaged writing, and never lifted his head from the paper. The walls of the room were covered with shelves, filled with books; and on the chairs about, and even on the floor, lay maps and drawings in every disorder; a sword and belt, as if just taken off, lay on the table among the writing materials, and a cocked hat beside them. While I noticed these details my very heart was chill within me. The dark figure at the window, which stirred not, seemed as if turned towards me, and more than once I almost thought I could see his eyes bent upon me. This was, however, but the mere suggestion of my own fears, for in the shade of the seat no light whatever fell, and I was perfectly concealed.

In the deep stillness I could hear the scraping sound of the pen on the paper, and scarcely dared to breath, lest I should cause discovery, when the figure retired from the window, and moved towards the table; for some minutes he appeared to stoop over a large map, which lay outstretched before him, and across which I could see his finger moving rapidly. Suddenly he stood erect, and in a voice which even now rings within my heart, said: "It must be so, Duroc; by any other route Bernadotte will be too late!" What was the reply I know not, such terror now fell over me. It was the Emperor himself who spoke. It was he who the instant before was standing close beside me at the window; and thus, a second time in my life, did I become the unwilling eavesdropper

of the man I most feared and respected of all the world. Before I could summon resolution to withdraw, Napoleon spoke again. "Hardenberg," said he, in a tone of contemptuous passion—"Hardenberg is but a Prussian; the event will satisfy *his* scruples; besides, if they do talk about invasion of territory, you can reply; the Margraves were always open to belligerent parties; remind them of what took place in '96, and again in 1800, though, *parbleu*, the *souvenir* may not be so pleasant a one; protract the discussion, at all events, Duroc; time!—time! Then," added he, after a brief pause, "let them advance, and they'll never pass the Danube; and if they wait for me, I'll fall upon them here—here, between Ulm and Augsburg. You must, however, start for Berlin at once." At this instant a heavy hand fell upon my shoulder, and, passing down my arm, seized me by the wrist. I started back, and beheld a dragoon, for so his helmet and cloak bespoke, of enormous stature, who, motioning me to silence, led me softly and with noiseless step along the flower-beds, as if fearful of attracting the Emperor's notice. My limbs tottered beneath me as I went, for the dreadful imputation an accident might fix on me, stared on me with all its awful consequences. Without a word on either side we reached the little railing, crossed it, and regained the open park, when the soldier, placing himself in front of me, said, in a deep, low voice,—

"Your name—who are you?"

"An officer of the *huitième* regiment of hussars," said I, boldly.

"We shall see that presently," replied he, in a tone of disbelief. "How came you here?"

In a few words I explained how, having remained too late in the garden, I preferred to pass my night on a bench, to the unpleasantness of being brought up before the officer on duty, adding, that it was only on the very moment of his coming that I awoke.

"I know that," interrupted he, in a less surly voice. "I found you sleeping, and feared to awake you suddenly, lest in the surprise a word or a cry would escape you—one syllable had cost your head."

In the tone of these last few words there was something I thought I could recognize, and resolving at a bold ven-

ture in such an emergency as I found myself placed, I said at a hazard,—

"The better fortune mine, that I fell into the hands of a kind as well as a brave soldier—the Corporal Pioche."

"*Sacristi!* You know me then!" cried he, thunder-struck.

"To be sure I do. Could I be an aide-de-camp to the General d'Auvergne, and not have heard of Pioche?"

"An aide-de-camp of the general," said he, starting back, as he carried his hand to the salute. "Pardon, *mon officier*; but you know that duty——"

"Quite true; it was all my own indiscretion. And now, Pioche, if you'll keep me company here till daybreak—it cannot be far off now—the light will soon satisfy you that my account of myself is a true one."

"Willingly, sir," said the gruff cuirassier: "my patrol is, to watch the parterres from the pavilion to the *allée* yonder; and, if you please, we'll take up our quarters on this bench."

They who know not the strange mixture of deference and familiarity of which the relation between officer and soldier is made up in the French service, will perhaps wonder at the tone of almost equality in which we now conversed. But such is the case; the revolutionary armies acknowledged no other gradations of rank than such as the service conferred, nor any degree of superiority save that derivable from greater ability, or more daring heroism; and although no troops more implicitly obeyed the commands of their officers, the occasion of discipline over, a perfect feeling of equality reigned amongst all, whether they wore the epaulettes of colonel or carried a musket in the ranks. With time, and the changes the Consulate had introduced, much of this excessive familiarity was suppressed; still it was no uncommon thing to hear the humble rank and file address the general of division as "thou"—the expression of closest friendship, probably dating from the hours of schoolboy attachment: nor was the officer of rank thought less of because, in the hours of off-duty, he mixed freely with those who had been his companions through life, and talked with them as brothers. It is probable that in no other nation such a course could have been practised without a total subversion of all respect,

and the ruin of all habits of order. The Frenchman is, however, essentially military; not merely warlike, like the inhabitants of Great Britain, his mind ever inclines to the details of war as an art. It is in generalship he glories, not the mere conflict of force; and the humblest soldier in the army takes an interest in the great game of tactics, which in any other people would be quite incredible. Hence he submits to the control which otherwise he could not endure; for this, he yields to command at the hands of one, who, although his equal in all other respects, he here acknowledges as his superior. He knows, too, that the grade of officer is open to merit alone, and he feels that the epaulette may be his own one day. Such causes as these, constantly in operation, could not fail to raise the *morale* of an army; nor can we wonder that from such a source were derived many, if not most, of the great names that formed the marshals of France.

Again, to this military spirit the French owe the perfection of their *tirailleur* force—the consummate skill of independent parties, of which every campaign gave evidence. Napoleon found this spirit in the nation, and spared nothing to give it its fullest development. He quickly saw to what height of enthusiasm a people could be brought, to whom a cross or a decoration, an epaulette or a sabre of honour, were deemed the ample rewards of every daring and of every privation; and never in any age, or in any country, was chivalry so universally spread over the wide surface of a people. With them, rank claimed no exception from fatigue or suffering. The officer fared little better than the soldier on a march; in a battle, he was only more exposed to danger; by daring only could he win his way upwards; and an emulative ardour was continually maintained, which was ever giving to the world instances of individual heroism, far more brilliant than all the famed achievements of the crusaders.

This brief digression, unnecessary perhaps to many of my readers, may serve to explain to others how naturally our conversation took the easy tone of familiar equality; nor will they be surprised at the abrupt question of the cuirassier, as he said,—

“*Mille tonnerres!* lieutenant, was it from your liking the post of danger you selected that bench yonder?”

"The choice was a mere accident."

"An accident, *morbleu!*" said he, with a low laugh. "That was what Lasalle called it at the Adige, when the wheel came off the eight-pounder in the charge, and the enemy carried off the gun. 'An accident!' said the Petit Caporal to him—I was close by when he said it—'will your friends in Paris call it an accident if the "*ordre du jour*" to-morrow condemn you to be shot?' I know him well," continued Pioche, "that I do; I was second bombardier with him at Toulon—ay, at Cairo too. I mind well the evening he came to our quarters—poor enough we were at the time—no clothes, no rations. I was cook to our division, but somehow there was little duty in my department, till one day the vivandière's ass—a brave beast he was too, before provisions fell short—a spent shot took him in the flank, and killed him on the spot. *Sacristi!* what damage it did; all the canteens were smashed to atoms; horn goblets and platters knocked to pieces; but worst of all, a keg of true Nantz was broached, and every drop lost. Poor Madame Gougou, she loved that ass as if he had been one of the regiment; and though we all offered her assignats on our pay, for a month each, to give us the carcass, she wouldn't do it. No, faith! she would have him buried; and with funeral honours! *Parbleu!* it was a whim; but the poor thing was in grief, and we could not refuse her. I commanded the party," continued Pioche, "and a long distance we had to march, lest the shots might be heard in the *quartier-général*. Well, we had some trouble in getting the poor soul away from the grave. *Sacristi!* she took it so much to heart, I thought she'd have masses said for him; but we did succeed at last, and before dawn we were all within the camp as if nothing had happened. The whole of that day, however, the ass was never out of our minds. It was not grief—no, no! don't think that; we were all thinking of what a sin it was to have him buried there—such a fine beast as he was—and not a pound of meat to be had, if you were to offer a nine-pounder gun for it. 'He is never the worse for his funeral,' said I; 'remember, boys, how well preserved he was in brandy before he was buried. Let's have him up again!' No sooner was night come, than we set off for the place where we laid him, and in less

than two hours I was busily employed in making a delicious *salmi* of his haunch. *Mille bombes!* I think I have the smell of it before me; it was *gibier*, and the gravy was like a *puisée*. We were all pleasantly seated round the fire, watching every turn of the roast, when, *crack!* I heard the noise of the patrol bringing his gun to the present, and before we had time to jump up, the Petit Caporal was upon us—he was mounted on a little dark Arab, and dressed in his grey surtout.

“‘What’s all this here?’ cried he, pulling up short, while the barb sniffed the air, just as if he guessed what the meat was. ‘Who has stolen this sheep?’”

“‘It is not a sheep, general,’ said I, stepping forward, and trying to hide the long ladle I was basting with.

“‘Not a sheep—then it is an ox, mayhap, or a calf,’ said he again, with an angry look.

“‘Neither, general,’ said I; ‘it was a—a—a beast of our division.’”

“‘A beast of your division! What does that mean? No trifling, mind! Out with it at once. What’s this? Where did it come from?’”

“‘An ass, may it please you, sir,’ said I, trembling all over, for I saw he was in a rare passion; and as he repeated the word after me, I told him the whole story, and how we could not suffer such capital prog to be eaten by any other than good citizens of the Republic.

“While I was telling him so much, the rest stood round terrified; they could not even turn the joint, though it was burning, and, to say truth, I thought myself we were all in a bad way, when suddenly he burst into a fit of laughing, and said,—

“‘What part of France do these fellows come from?’”

“‘Alsace, *mon général*,’ was the answer from every one.

“‘I thought so, I thought so,’ said he. ‘Sybarites—all.’”

“‘No, *mon général*—grenadiers of the Fourth—Milhaud’s brigade,’ said I; and with that he turned away, and we could hear him laughing long after he galloped off. I saw he mistook us,” said Pioche, “and that he could not be angry with the old Fourth.”

“You must have seen a great deal of hardship, Pioche?”

said I, as he came to a pause; and wishing to draw him on to speak more of his campaigns.

"*Ma foi*, there were few who saw service from '92 to '97 had not their share of it; but they were brave times, too; every battle had its day of promotion afterwards. Le Petit Caporal would ride down the ranks with his staff, looking for this one, and asking for that. 'Where's the adjutant of the Sixth?' 'Dead, *mon général*.' 'Where's the colonel of the Voltigeurs?' 'Badly wounded.' 'Carry him this sabre of honour.' 'Who fell over the Austrian standard, and carried away the fragment of the drapeau?' 'One of my fellows, general; here he is.' 'And what is your name, my brave fellow?'"

The corporal paused here, and drew a deep breath; and after a few seconds' pause, added in altered tone, "*Sacristi!* they were fine times!"

"But what did he say to the soldier that took the colours?" asked I, impatiently. "Who was he?"

"It was I," replied Pioche himself, in a deep voice, where pride and devotion struggled powerfully together.

"You, Pioche—indeed! Well, what said the general when he saw you?"

"'Ah, Pioche,' said he, gaily, 'my old friend of Toulouse.'

"'Yes, general,' said I, 'we've had some warm work together.'

"'True, Pioche, and may again perhaps; but you've been made a corporal since that; what am I to do for you now?'"

"This was a puzzling question, and I did not know how to answer it, and he repeated it before I could make up my mind.

"'Is there nothing, then, in which I can be of use to Corporal Pioche?'"

"'Yes, *mon général*,' said I, 'there is.'

"'Speak it out, man, then; what is it?'"

"'I wish, then, you'd rate the commissary-general of our division for one blunder he's ever making. The powder they serve us out is always wet, and our bread is as hard as *mitraille*. Neither bayonets nor teeth will last for ever, you know, general.' And he burst out a-laughing before I finished."

“‘Rest assured, Pioche, I’ll look to this,’ said he; and he kept his word.”

“But why didn’t you ask for promotion?” said I; “what folly, was it not, to throw away such a chance? You might have been an officer ere this.”

“No,” replied he, with a sorrowful shake of the head “that was impossible.”

“But why so? Bonaparte knew you well; he often noticed you.”

“True—all true,” said he, more sadly than before; “but then——”

“What, then?” asked I, with more of interest than delicacy at the moment.

“I never learned to read,” said Pioche, in a low voice, which trembled with agitation, while he drew his swarthy hand across his eyes, and was silent.

The few words so spoken thrilled most powerfully within me. I saw that I had awakened the saddest thoughts of the poor fellow’s heart, and would have given worlds to be able to recall my question. Here, then, was the corroding sorrow of his life—the grief that left its impress on his stern features, and tinged with care the open brow of the brave soldier. Each moment our silence was prolonged made it still more poignant, but I made an effort to break it, and happily with success.

“After all, Pioche,” said I, laying my hand on his arm, “I would willingly exchange my epaulettes for these stripes on your sleeve, to have had Bonaparte speak to me as he has spoken to you; that was a prouder distinction than any other, and will be a fonder recollection, too, hereafter.”

“Do you think so, *mon lieutenant?*” said the poor fellow, turning round quickly, as a faint smile played about his features. “Do you think so? *Sacristi!* I have said as much to myself sometimes, when I’ve been alone; and then I’ve almost thought I could hear his kind, soft voice ringing in my ears—for it is kind and soft as a woman’s, when he pleases, though, *parbleu!* it can call like a trumpet at other times, ay, and tingle within your heart, till it sets your blood boiling, and makes your hands twitch. I mind well the campaign in the Valais—the words keep dinning in my ears to this hour.”

"What was that, Pioche?" said I, pleased to see him turn from the remembrance of his own regrets.

"It is a good while past now—I forget the year exactly—but we were marching on Italy, and it was in spring; still, the ground was covered with snow; every night came on with a hailstorm that lasted till nigh daybreak; and when we arose from the bivouac, we were so stiff and frozen we could not move. They said, at the time, something went wrong with the commissariat—but when did it ever go right, I wonder? Ammunition and provisions were always late; and though the general used to drive away a commissary every week or ten days for misconduct, the new ones that came turned out just as bad. The Petit Caporal kept sending them word to Paris not to send down any more 'savants,' but a good, honest man, with common sense and active habits; but, *parbleu!* birds of that feather must have been rare just then, for we never could catch one of them. Whatever was the cause, we never were so ill off: our chakos were like wet paper, and took any shape; and out of ridicule we used to come upon parade with them fashioned into three-cocked hats, and pointed caps, and slouched beavers. The officers couldn't say a word, you know, all this time. It was not our fault if we were in such misery. Then, as to shoes—a few could boast of the upper-leathers, but a sole or a heel was not to be found in a company. Our coats were actually in rags, and a pivot sentry looked, for all the world, like a flagstaff, as he stood fluttering in the wind.

"We bore up, however, as well as we could for some time, grumbling occasionally over our condition, and sometimes laughing at it, when we had the heart; till at last, when we saw the new convoy arrive, and all the biscuits distributed among the young regiments and the new conscripts, we could endure it no longer, and a terrible outcry arose among the troops. We were all drawn up on parade—it was an inspection; for, *parbleu!* though we were as ragged as scarecrows, they would have us out twice a week to review us, and put us through the manœuvres. Scarcely had the general—it was Bonaparte himself—got half-way down the line, when a shout ran from rank to rank—'Bread! shoes! caps! biscuits!'

"'What do I hear?' said Bonaparte, standing up in his

stirrups, and frowning at the line. 'Who are the malcontents that dare to cry out on parade? Let them stand out. Let me see them.'

"And at once more than half the regiment of grenadiers sprang forward, and shouted louder than before, 'Bread! bread! Let us have food and clothing! If we are to fight, let us not die of hunger!'

"'Grenadiers of the Fourth,' cried he, in a terrible voice, 'to your ranks. Second division, and third!' shouted he, with his hand up, 'form in square—carry arms!—present arms!—front rank, kneel!—kneel!' said he, again, louder; for you know we never did *that* in those days. However, every word was obeyed, and down dropped the leading files on their knees, and there we were rooted to the ground. Not a man spoke—all silent as death.

"He then advanced to the front of the staff, and pointing his hand to a convoy of waggons that could just be seen turning the angle of the road, with white flags flying, to show what they were, called out—'Commissary-general, distribute full rations and half ammunition to the young regiments—half rations and full ammunition to the veterans of Egypt!' A shout of applause burst out, but he cried louder than before—'Silence in the ranks!' Then, taking off his chapeau, he stood bare-headed before us; and, in a voice like the bugle that blows the charge, he read from a large paper in his hand—'In the name of the French Republic—one and indivisible. The Directory of the nation decrees—that the thanks of the Government be given to the Grenadiers of the Fourth, who have deserved well of their country. *Vive la République!*'

"'Vive la République!' shouted the whole square in a roar, like the sea itself. Who thought more of hardships or hunger then? Our only desire was, when we were to meet the enemy; and many a jest and many a laugh went round, as we loaded our pouches with the new ammunition.

"'Who's that fellow yonder?' said Bonaparte, as he rode slowly down the line. 'I should know him, I think. Isn't that Pioche?'

"'Yes, *mon général*,' said I, saluting him. 'It is what remains of poor Pioche; *parbleu!* very little more than half, though.'

"'Ah! glutton,' said he, laughing, 'I ought to have

guessed you were here ; one such gourmand is enough to corrupt a whole brigade.'

" 'Pioche is a good soldier, citizen-general,' said my captain, who was an old schoolfellow of mine.

" 'I know it, captain,' said the general.

" 'You were in Excelmans's dragoons, Pioche, if I mistake not ?'

" 'Two years and ten months, citizen-general.'

" 'Why did you leave them, and when ?'

" 'At Monte Bello, with the colonel's permission.'

" 'And the reason ?'

" ' *Morbleu!* it was a fancy I had. They killed two horses under me that day, and I saw I was not destined for the cavalry.'

" 'Ha, ha!' said he, with a sly laugh ; 'had they been asses, the thing might have been different—eh ?'

" 'Yes, *mon général,*' said I, growing red ; for I knew what he meant.

" 'Come, Pioche, you must go back again to your old corps ; they want one or two like you—though, *parbleu!* you'll ruin the Republic in remounts.'

" 'As you please it, general.'

" 'Well, what shall I do for you besides ? Any more commissaries to row—eh ? Methinks no bad time to gratify you in that way.'

" 'Ah, *mon général!* if you would only hang up one now and then.'

" 'So I intend, the next time I hear of any of my soldiers being obliged to eat the asses of the vivandières.' And with that he rode on, laughing, though none, save myself, knew what he alluded to ; and, *ma foi,* I was not disposed to turn the laugh against myself by telling. But there goes the *réveil,* and I must leave you, *mon lieutenant ;* the gates will be open in a few minutes."

" 'Good-bye, Pioche,' said I, "and many thanks for your pleasant company. I hope we shall meet again, and soon."

" 'I hope so, *mon lieutenant ;* and if it be at a bivouac fire, all the better."

The gallant corporal made his military salute, wheeled about, stiff as if on parade, and departed ; while I, throwing my cloak over my arm, turned into the broad alley and left the garden.

CHAPTER XLI.

A STORY OF THE YEAR '92.

I FOUND everything in the Rue de Rohan as I had left it the day before. General d'Auvergne had not been there during my absence, but a messenger from Versailles brought intelligence that the Court would arrive that evening in Paris, and in all likelihood the general would accompany them.

My day was then at my disposal, and having dressed, I strolled out to enjoy all the strange and novel sights of the great capital. They who can carry their memories back to Paris at that period, may remember the prodigious amount of luxury and wealth so prodigally exhibited—the equipages, the liveries, the taste in dress, were all of the most costly character—the very shops, too, vied with each other in the splendour and richness of their display, and court uniforms and ornaments of jewellery glittered in every window. Hussar jackets in all their bravery—chapeaux covered with feather trimming and looped with diamonds—sabres with ivory scabbards encrusted with topaz and turquoise, replaced the simple costumes of the revolutionary era, as rapidly as did the high-sounding titles of "Excellence" and "Monseigneur" the unpretending designation of "citoyen." Still, the military feature of the land was in the ascendant; in the phrase of the day, it was the "moustache" that governed. Not a street but had its group of officers, on horseback or on foot—regiments passed on duty, or arrived from the march at every turn of the way. The very rabble kept time and step as they followed, and the warlike spirit animated every class of the population. All these things ministered to my enthusiasm, and set my heart beating stronger for the time when the career of arms was to open before me. This, if I were to judge

from all I saw, could not now be far distant. The country for miles around Paris was covered with marching men, their faces all turned eastward—orderlies, booted and splashed, trotted rapidly from street to street, and general officers, with their aides-de-camp, rode up and down with a haste that boded preparation.

My mind was too full of its own absorbing interests to make me care to visit the theatre, and having dined in a café on the Boulevard, I turned towards the general's quarters, in the hope of finding him arrived. As I entered the Rue de Rohan, I was surprised at a crowd collected about the door, watching the details of packing a travelling carriage which stood before it. A heavy fourgon, loaded with military chests and boxes, seemed also to attract their attention, and call forth many a surmise as to its destination.

"Le Petit Caporal has something in his head, depend upon it," said a thin, dark-whiskered fellow with a wooden leg, whose air and gesture bespoke the old soldier; "the staff never move off, extra post, without a good reason for it."

"It is the English are about to catch it this time," said a miserable-looking, decrepit creature, who was occupied in roasting chestnuts over an open stove. "Hot, all hot! messieurs et mesdames! real 'marrons de Nancy'—the true and only veritable chestnuts with a truffle flavour. *Sacristi!* now the sea-wolves will meet their match. It is such brave fellows as you, *monsieur le grenadier*, can make them tremble."

The old pensioner smoothed down his moustache, and made no reply.

"The English, indeed!" said a fat, ruddy-faced woman, with a slight line of dark beard on her upper lip; "my husband's a pioneer in the Twenty-second, and says they're nothing better than poltroons. How we made them run at Arcole! Wasn't it Arcole?" said she, as a buzz of laughter ran through the crowd.

"*Tonnerre de guerre,*" cried the little man, "if I was at them!" A loud burst of merriment met this warlike speech, while the maimed soldier, apparently pleased with the creature's courage, smiled blandly on him as he said, "Let me have two sous' worth of your chestnuts."

Leaving the party to their discussion, I now entered the house, and edging my way upstairs between trunks and packing-cases, arrived at the drawing-room. The general had just come in; he had been the whole morning at Court, and was eating a hurried dinner in order to return to the Tuileries for the evening reception. Although his manner towards me was kind and cordial in the extreme, I thought he looked agitated and even depressed, and seemed much older and more broken than before.

"You see, Burke, you'll have little time to enjoy Paris gaieties—we leave to-morrow."

"Indeed, sir!—so soon?"

"Yes, Lasalle is off already; Dorsenne starts in two hours; and we three rendezvous at Coblenz. I wished much to see you," continued he, after a minute's pause; "but I could not get away from Versailles even for a day. Tell me, have you got a letter I wrote to you when at Mayence? I mean, is it still in existence?"

"Yes, sir," said I, somewhat astonished at the question.

"I wrote it hurriedly," added he, with something of confusion in his manner; "do let me see it."

I unlocked my writing-desk at once, and handed him his own letter. He opened it hastily, and having thrown his eyes speedily across it, said, and in a voice far more at ease than before,—

"That will do. I feared lest perhaps— But no matter—this is better than I thought."

With this he gave the letter back into my hands, and appeared for some moments engaged in deep thought; then, with a voice and manner which showed a different channel was given to his thoughts, he said,—

"The game has opened—the Austrians have invaded Bavaria. The whole disposable force of France is on the march—a hurried movement—but so it is. Napoleon always strikes like his own emblem, the eagle."

"True, sir; but even that serves to heighten the chivalrous feeling of the soldier, when the sword springs from the scabbard at the call of honour, and is not drawn slowly forth at the whispered counsel of some wily diplomat."

He smiled half-mournfully at the remark, or at my impetuosity in making it, as he said,—

"My dear boy, never flatter yourself that the cause of any war can enter into the calculation of the soldier. The liberty he fights for is often the rankest tyranny; the patriotism he defends the veriest oppression. Play the game as though the stake were but your own ambition, if you would play it manfully. As for me, I buckle on the harness for the last time, come what will of it. The Emperor feels, and justly feels, indignant that many of the older officers have declined the service by which alone they were elevated to rank, and wealth, and honour. It was not, then, at the moment when he distinguished me by an unsought promotion, still more, conferred a personal favour on me, that I could ask leave to retire from the army."

By the tone in which he said these last few words, I saw that the general was now approaching the topic I felt so curious about, and did not venture by a word to interrupt or divert his thoughts from it. My calculation proved correct; for, after meditating some eight or ten minutes, he drew his chair closer to mine, and in a voice of ill-repressed agitation, spoke thus,—

"You, doubtless, know the history of our great revolution, the causes that led to, the consequences that immediately sprang from it—the terrible anarchy, the utter confiscation of wealth, and, worse still, the social disorganization that invaded every family, however humble, or however exalted, setting wives against their husbands, children against their parents, and making brothers sworn enemies to each other. It was in vain for any man once engaged in the struggle to draw back; the least hesitation to perform any order of the Convention—the delay of a moment, to think—was death; some one was ever on the watch to denounce the man thus deliberating, and he was led forth to the guillotine like the blackest criminal. The immediate result of all this was a distrust that pervaded the entire nation. No one knew who to speak to, nor dare any confide in him who once had been his dearest friend. The old Royalists trembled at every stir; the few demonstrations they forced themselves to make of concurrence in the new state of things, were received with suspicion and jealousy. The 'Blues,' for so the revolutionary party was called, thirsted for their blood; the

aristocracy had been, as they deemed, long their oppressors; and where vengeance ceased, cupidity began. They longed to seize upon the confiscated estates, and revel as masters in the halls where so oft they had waited as lacqueys. But the evil ended not here: wherever private hate or secret malice lurked, an opportunity for revenge now offered, and for one head that fell under the supposed guilt of treason to France, a hundred dropped beneath the axe from causes of personal animosity and long-nurtured vengeance; and thus many an idle word uttered in haste or carelessness, some passing slight, some chance neglect, met now its retribution, and that retribution was ever death.

“ It chanced that in the south, in one of those remote districts where intelligence is always slow in arriving, and where political movements rarely disturb the quiet current of daily life, there lived one of those old seigneurs who, at that period, were deemed sovereign princes in the little *locale* they inhabited. The soil had been their own for centuries, long custom had made them respected and looked up to, while the acts of kindness and benevolence in which, from father to son, their education consisted, formed even a stronger tie to the affections of the peasantry. The Church, too, contributed not a little to the maintenance of this feudalism, and the ‘château’ entered into the subject of the village prayers as naturally as though a very principle of their faith. There was something beautifully touching in the intercourse between the lord of the soil and its tillers—in the kindly interest of the one, repaid in reverence and devotion by the others; *his* foresight for their benefit, *their* attachment and fidelity, the paternal care, the filial love, made a picture of rural happiness such as no land ever equalled, such as perhaps none will ever see again. The seigneur of whom I speak was a true type of this class; he had been, in his boyhood, a page at the gorgeous Court of Louis XV., mixed in the voluptuous fascinations of the period, but, early disgusted by the sensuality of the day, retired to his distant château, bringing with him a wife, one of the most beautiful and accomplished persons of the Court, but one who, like himself, preferred the peace and tranquillity of a country life to the whirlwind pleasures of a vicious capital. For years

they lived childless; but at last, after a long lapse of time, two children were born to this union, a boy and girl, both lovely, and likely in every respect to bless them with happiness. Shortly after the birth of the girl, the mother became delicate, and after some months of suffering, died. The father, who never rallied from the hour of her death, and took little interest in the world, soon followed her, and the children were left orphans when the eldest was but four years of age, and his sister but three. Before the count died, he sent for his steward;—you know that the steward, or intendant, in France, was formerly the person of greatest trust in any family, the faithful adviser in times of difficulty, the depository of secrets, the friend, in a word, who in humble guise offered his counsel in every domestic arrangement, and without whom no project was entertained or determined on; and usually the office was hereditary, descending from father to son for centuries.

“In this family such was the case; his father and grandfather before him had filled the office, and Léon Guichard well knew every tradition of the house, and from his infancy his mind had been stored with tales of its ancient wealth and former greatness. His father had died but a short time previous, and when the Count's last illness seized him, Léon was only in the second year of his stewardship. Brief as the period was, however, it had sufficed to give abundant proof of his zeal and ability. New sources of wealth grew up under his judicious management—improvements were everywhere conspicuous; and while the seigneur himself found his income increased by nearly one-half, the tenants had gained in equal proportion; such was the result of his activity and intelligence. These changes, marvellous as they may seem, were then of frequent occurrence—the lands of the south had been tilled for centuries without any effort at improvement—sons were content to go on as their fathers had done before them—increased civilization, with its new train of wants and luxuries, never invaded this remote, untravelled district, and primitive tastes and simple habits succeeded each other generation after generation unaltered and unchanged. Suddenly, however, a new light broke on the world, which penetrated even the darkness of the far-off valleys of La Provence. Intelligence began to be more

widely diffused—men read and reflected—the rudiments of every art and every science were put within the reach of humble comprehensions ; and they who before were limited to memory or hearsay for such knowledge as they possessed, could now apply at the fountain for themselves. Léon Guichard was not slow in cultivating these new resources, and applying them to the circumstances about him ; and although many an obstacle arose, dictated by stupid adherence to old customs, or fast-rooted prejudice against new-fashioned methods, by perseverance he overcame them all, and actually enriched the people in spite of themselves.

“ The seigneur, himself a man of no mean intellect, saw much of this with sorrow—he felt that a mighty change was accomplishing, and that as one by one the ancient landmarks by which men had been guided for ages were removed, none could foresee what results might follow, nor where the passion for alteration might cease. The superstitions of the Church, harmless in themselves, were now openly attacked ; its observances, before so deeply venerated, were even assailed as idle ceremonies, and it seemed as if the strong cable that bound men to faith and loyalty had parted, and that their minds were drifting over a broad and pathless sea. Such was the ominous opening of the revolution, such the terrible ground-swell before the storm.

“ On his death-bed, then, he entreated Léon to be aware that evil days were approaching—that the time was not distant when men should rely upon the affection and love of those around them, on the ties that attached to each other for years long, on the mutual interest that had grown up from their cradles—he besought him to turn the people's minds, as far as might be, from the specious theories that were afloat, and fix them on their once-loved traditions—and, above all, he charged him, as the guardian of his orphan children, to keep *them* aloof from the contamination of dangerous doctrines, and to train them up in the ancient virtues of their house, in charity and benevolence.

“ Scarce had the old count's grave closed over him, when men began to perceive a marked change in Léon Guichard ; no longer humble, even to subserviency, as

before, he now assumed an air of pride and haughtiness that soon estranged his companions from him. As guardian to the orphan children, he resided in the château, and took on him the pretensions of the master. Its stately equipage, with great emblazoned panels, the village wonder at every fête-day, was now replaced by a more modern vehicle, newly arrived from Paris, in which Monsieur Guichard daily took his airings. The old servants, many of them born in the château, were sent adrift, and a new and very different class succeeded them; all was changed; even the little path that led up from the presbytère to the château, and along which the old curé was seen wending his way on each Sunday to his dinner with the seigneur, was now closed—the gate walled up—while the Sabbath itself was only dedicated to greater festivities and excess, to the scandal of the villagers.

“Meanwhile, the children grew up in strength and beauty; like wild flowers, they had no nurture, but they flourished in all this neglect, ignorant and unconscious of the scenes around them. They roved about the livelong day through the meadows, or that wilderness of a garden, on which no longer any care was bestowed, and where rank luxuriance gave a beauty of its own to the rich vegetation. With the unsuspecting freshness of their youth, they enjoyed the present without a thought of the future—they loved each other, and were happy. To them the vague reports and swelling waves of the revolution, which each day gained ground, brought neither fear nor apprehension; they little dreamed that the violence of political strife could ever reach their quiet valleys: nor did they think the hour was near when the tramp of soldiery, and the ruffianly shout of predatory war, were to replace the song of the vigneron and the dance of the villager. The revolution came at last, sweeping like a torrent over the land; it blasted as it went—beneath its baneful breath everything withered and wasted—loyalty, religion, affection, and brotherly love, all died out in the devoted country—anarchy and bloodshed were masters of the scene. The first dreadful act of this fearful drama passed like a dream to those who, at a distance from Paris, only read of the atrocities of that wretched capital; but when the wave rolled nearer, when crowds of armed men,

wild and savage in look, with ragged uniforms and blood-stained hands, prowled about the villages, where in happier times a soldier had never been seen—when the mob around the guillotine supplied the place of the gathering at the market—when the pavement was wet and slippery with human blood, men's natures suddenly became changed, as though some terrible curse from on high had fallen on them; their minds caught up the fearful contagion of revolt, and a mad impulse to deny all they had once held sacred and venerable seized on all. Their blasphemies against religion went hand in hand with their desecration of everything holy in social life, and a pre-eminence in guilt became the highest object of ambition. Sated with slaughter, bloated with crime, the nation reeled like a drunken savage over the ruin it created, and with the insane lust of blood poured forth its armed thousands throughout the whole of Europe. Then began the much-boasted triumphs of the revolutionary armies—the lauded victories of those great asserters of liberty—say, rather, the carnage of famished wolves, the devastating rage of bloodthirsty maniacs. The conscription seized on the whole youth of France, as if fearful that, in the untarnished minds of the young, the seeds of better things might bear fruit in season. They carried them away to scenes of violence and rapine, where, amid the shouts of battle and the cries of the dying, no voice of human sympathy might touch their hearts, no trembling of remorse should stir within them.

“‘You are named in the conscription, Monsieur,’ said Léon, in a short abrupt tone, as one morning he entered the dressing-room of his young master.

“‘I! I named in the conscription!’ replied the other, with a look of incredulity and anger. ‘This is but a sorry jest, Master Léon, and not in too good taste, either.’

“‘Good or bad,’ answered the steward, ‘the fact is as I say; here is the order from the *municipalité*. You were fifteen yesterday, you know.’

“‘True; and what then? Am I not Marquis de Neufchâtel, Count de Rochefort, in right of my mother?’

“‘There are no more marquises, no more counts,’ said the other, roughly; ‘France has had enough of such cattle; the less you allude to them the safer for your head.’

"He spoke truly, the reign of the aristocracy was ended; and while they were yet speaking, an emissary of the Convention, accompanied by a party of troops, arrived at the château to fetch away the newly-drawn conscript.

"I must not dwell on the scene which followed—the heartrending sorrow of those who had lived but for each other, now torn asunder for the first time, not knowing when, if ever, they were to meet again. His sister wished to follow him, but even had he permitted it, such would have been impossible. The dreadful career of a revolutionary soldier was an obstacle insurmountable. The same evening the battalion of infantry to which he was attached began their march towards Savoy, and the lovely orphan of the château fell dangerously ill.

"Youth, however, triumphed over her malady, which, indeed, was brought on by grief; and after some weeks she was restored to health. During the interval, nothing could be more kind and attentive than Léon Guichard; his manner, of late years rough and uncivil, became softened and tender; the hundred little attentions which illness seeks for he paid with zeal and watchfulness; everything which could alleviate her sorrow or calm her afflicted mind, was resorted to with a kind of instinctive delicacy, and she began to feel that in her long-cherished dislike of the intendant she had done him grievous wrong.

"This change of manner attracted the attention of many besides the inhabitants of the château. They remarked his altered looks and bearing, the more studied attention to his dress and appearance, and the singular difference in all his habits of life; no longer did he pass his time in the wild orgies of debauchery and excess, but in careful management of the estate, and rarely or never left the château after nightfall.

"A hundred different interpretations were given to this line of acting: some said that the more settled condition of political affairs had made him cautious and careful, for it was now the reign of the Directory, and the old excesses of '92 were no longer endured; others, that he was naturally of a kind and benevolent nature, and that his savage manner and reckless conduct were assumed merely in compliance with the horrible features of the time. None, however, suspected the real cause. Léon Guichard

was in love! Yes, the humble steward, the coarse follower of the vices of that detestable period, was captivated by the beauty of the young girl, now springing into womanhood. The freshness of her artless nature, her guileless innocence, her soft voice, her character so balanced between gaiety and thoughtfulness, her loveliness, so unlike all he had ever seen before, had seized upon his whole heart; and, as the sun darting from behind the blackest clouds will light up the surface of a bleak landscape, touching every barren rock and tipping every bell of purple heath with colour and richness, so over his rugged nature the beauty of this fair girl shed a very halo of light, and a spirit awoke within him to seek for better things, to endeavour better things, to fly the coarse, depraved habits of his former self, to conform to the tastes of her he worshipped. Day by day his stern nature became more softened. No longer those terrible bursts of passion, to which he once gave way, escaped him; his voice, his very look, too, were changed in their expression, and a gentleness of manner almost amounting to timidity now characterized him who had once been the type of the most savage Jacobin.

“She to whom this wondrous change was owing knew nothing of the miracle she had worked; she would not, indeed, have believed, had one told her. She scarcely remarked him when they met, and did not perceive that he was no longer like his former self; her whole soul wrapped up in her dear brother’s fate, she lived from week to week in the thought of his letters home. It is true her life had many enjoyments which owed their source to the intendant’s care; but she knew not of this, and felt more grateful to him when he came letter in hand from the little post of the village, than when the fair moss-roses of spring filled the vases of the *salon*, or the earliest fruits of summer decked her table. At times something in his demeanour would strike her—a tinge of sorrow it seemed rather than aught else; but as she attributed this, as every other grief, to her brother’s absence, she paid no further attention to it, and merely thought good Léon had more feeling than they used to give him credit for.

“At last, the campaign of Arcole over, the young soldier obtained a short leave to see his sister. How altered were

they both ; she, from the child, had become the beautiful girl ; her eyes flashing with the brilliant sparkle of youth, her step elastic, her colour changing with every passing expression. He was already a man, bronzed and sun-burnt ; his dark eyes darker, and his voice deeper, but still his former self in all the warmth of his affection to his sister.

"The lieutenant, for so was he always called by the old soldier who accompanied him as his servant, and oftentimes by the rest of his household, had seen much of the world in the few years of his absence.

"The chances and changes of a camp had taught him many things which lie far beyond its own limits, and he had learned to scan men's minds and motives, with a quick eye and ready wit. He was not long, therefore, in observing the alteration in Léon Guichard's manner, nor was he slow in tracing it to its real cause. At first, the sudden impulse of his passion would have driven him to any length ; the presumption of such a thought was too great to endure—but then the times he lived in taught him some strong lessons ; he remembered the scenes of social disorder and anarchy of his childhood ; how every rank became subverted, and how men's minds were left to their own unbridled influences to choose their own position, and he bethought him, that in such trials as these, Léon had conducted himself with moderation ; that to his skilful management it was owing, if the property had not suffered confiscation like so many others, and that it was, perhaps, hard to condemn a man for being struck by charms which, however above him in the scale of rank, were still continually before his eyes. Reasoning thus, he determined, as the wisest course, to remove his sister to the house of a relative, where she could remain during his absence. This would at once put a stop to the steward's folly—for so he could not help deeming it—and, what was of equal consequence in the young soldier's eyes, prevent his sister being offended by ever suspecting the existence of such a feeling towards her. The plan, once resolved on, met no difficulty from his sister ; his promise to return soon to see her was enough to compensate for any arrangement, and it was determined that they should set out towards the south by the first week in September.

“When the intimation of this change first reached Léon, which it did from the other servants, he could not believe it, and resolved to hasten to the lieutenant himself, and ask if it were true. On that day, however, the young soldier was absent shooting, and was not to return before night. Tortured with doubt and fear, trembling at the very thought of her departure—whose presence had been the loadstar of his life—he rushed from the house and hurried into the wood. Every spot reminded him of her, and he shuddered to think that in a few hours his existence would have lost its spring—that ere the week was passed he would be alone without the sight of her, whom, even to have seen, constituted the happiness of the whole day. Revolving such sad thoughts, he strolled on, not knowing whither, and, at last, on turning the angle of a path, found himself before the object of his musings; she was returning from a farewell visit to one of the cottagers, and was hastening to the château to dress for dinner.

“‘Ah, Monsieur Léon,’ said she, suddenly, ‘I am glad to meet you here—these poor people at the wooden bridge will miss me, I fear; you must look to them in my absence. And there is old Jeannette—she fancies she can spin still—I pray you let her have her little pension regularly. The children at Calotte, too—they are too far from the school—mind that they have their books.’

“‘And are you indeed going from hence, mademoiselle?’ said he, in a tone and accent so unlike his ordinary one, as to make her start with surprise.

“‘Yes, to be sure. We leave the day after to-morrow.’

“‘And have you no regret, mademoiselle, to leave the home of your childhood and those you have—known there?’

“‘Sir!’ replied she haughtily, as the tone of his voice assumed a meaning which could not be mistaken; ‘you seem to have forgotten yourself somewhat, or you had not dared—’

“‘Dared!’ interrupted he, in a louder key—‘dared! I have dared more than that! Yes,’ cried he, in a voice where passion could be no longer held under, ‘Léon Guichard, the steward, has dared to love his master’s daughter! Start not so proudly back, madame! Time was when such an avowal had been a presumption death

could not repay ; but these days are passed. The haughty have been well humbled ; they who deemed their blood a stream too pure to mingle with the current in plebeian veins, have poured it lavishly beneath the guillotine. Léon Guichard has no master now !'

"The fire flashed from his eyes as he spoke, and his colour, pale at first, grew darker and darker, till his face became almost purple, while his nostrils, swelled to twice their natural size, dilated and contracted like those of a fiery charger. Terrified at the frightful paroxysm of passion before her, the timid girl endeavoured to allay his anger, and replied,—

"You know well, Léon, that my brother has ever treated you as a friend——"

"'He a friend!' cried he, stamping on the ground, while a look of demoniac malice lit up his features. 'He, who talks to me as though I were a vassal—a slave ; he, who deems his merest word of approval a recompense for all my labour—all my toil ; he, whose very glance shoots into my heart like a dagger. Think you I forgive him the contemptuous treatment of nineteen years, or that I can pardon insults because they have grown into habits ? Hear me !'—he grasped her wrist rigidly as he spoke, and continued—'I have sworn an oath to be revenged on him from the hour when, a boy, scarce eight years old, he struck me in the face, and called me *canaille*. I vowed his ruin. I toiled for it, I strove for it, and I succeeded—ay, succeeded. I obtained from the Convention the confiscation of your lands—all—everything you possessed. I held the titles in my possession, for I was the owner of this broad château—ay—Léon Guichard—even so. You were but my guest here. I kept it by me many a day, and when your brother was drawn in the conscription, I resolved to assert my right before the world.' He paused for a moment, while a tremendous convulsion shook his frame, and made him tremble like one in an ague ; then, suddenly rallying, he passed his hand across his brow, and, in a lower voice, resumed, 'I would have done so, but for you.'

"'For me ! What mean you ?' said she, almost sinking with terror.

"'I loved you—loved you as only he can love who can surrender all his cherished hopes—his dream of ambition

—his vengeance even, to his love. I thought, too, that you were not cold to my advances; and fearing lest any hazard should apprise you of my success, and thus run counter to my wishes, I lived on here as your servant, still hoping for the hour when I might call you mine, and avow myself the lord of this château. How long I might have continued thus I know not. To see you, to look on you, to live beneath the same roof with you, seemed happiness enough; but when I heard that you were to leave this, to go away, never to return, perhaps, or if so, not as her I loved and worshipped, then — But why look you thus? Is it because you doubt these things? Look here, see this. Is that in form? Are these signatures authentic? Is this the seal of the National Convention? What say you now? It is not the steward Léon that sues, but the Citizen Guichard, *propriétaire de Rochefort*. Now, methinks, that makes some difference in the proposition.'

"'None, sir,' replied she, with a voice whose steady utterance made each word sink into his heart; 'save that it adds to my contempt for him who has dared to seek my affection in the ruin of my family. I did not despise you before——'

"'Beware,' said he, in a voice of menace, but in which no violence of passion entered, 'you are in my power. I ask you again, will you consent to be my wife? Will you save your brother from the scaffold, and yourself from beggary and ruin?—I can accomplish both.'

"A look of ineffable scorn was all her reply; when he sprang forward and threw his arm round her waist.

"'Or would you drive me to the worst——'

"A terrific shriek broke from her as she felt his hand around her, when the brushwood crashed behind her, and her brother's dogs sprang from the thicket. With a loud cry she called upon his name; he answered from the wood, and dashed towards her just as she sank fainting to the ground. Léon was gone.

"As soon as returning strength permitted, she told her brother the fearful story of the steward; but bound him by every entreaty not to bring himself in contact with a monster so depraved. When they reached the château, they learned that Guichard had been there and left it again; and from that hour they saw him no more.

"I must now conclude in a few words, and to do so, may mention, that in the year '99 I became the purchaser of Haut Rochefort, at a sale of forfeited estates, it having been bought by Government on some previous occasion, but from whom and how, I never heard. The story I have told I learned from the notaire of Hubane, the village in the neighbourhood, who was conversant with all its details, and knew well the several actors in it, as well as their future fortunes.

"The brother became a distinguished officer, and rose to some rank in the service, but embarking in the expedition to Ireland, was reported to Bonaparte as having betrayed the French cause. The result was, he was struck off the list of the army, and pronounced degraded; he died in some unknown place.

"The sister became attached to her cousin, but the brother opposing the union, she was taken away to Paris; the lover returned to Bretagne, where, having heard a false report of her marriage at Court, he assumed holy orders, and being subsequently charged, but it is now believed falsely, of corresponding with the Bourbons, was shot in his own garden by a platoon of infantry. But how is this? are you ill? has my story so affected you?"

"That brother was my friend—my dearest, my only friend, Charles de Mendon."

"What! and did you know poor Charles?"

But I could not speak; the tears ran fast down my cheeks as I thought of all his sorrows—sorrows far greater than ever he had told me.

"Poor Marie," said the general, as he wiped a tear from his eye; "few have met such an enemy as she did; every misfortune of her life has sprung from one hand; her brother's, her lover's death, were both his acts."

"Léon Guichard! And who is he? or how could he have done these things?"

"Methinks you might yourself reply to your own question."

"I! How could that be? I know him not."

"Yes, but you do: Léon Guichard is Mehée de la Touche!"

Had a thunderbolt fallen between us I could not have felt more terror. That name, spoken but twice or thrice in my

hearing, had each time brought its omen of evil. It was the same with whose acquaintance Marie de Meudon charged me in the garden of Versailles, the same who brought the Chouans to the guillotine, and had so nearly involved myself in their ruin; and now I heard of him as one whose dreadful life had been a course of perfidy and crime, one who blasted all around him, and scattered ruin as he went.

"I have little more to add," resumed the general, after a long pause, and in a voice whose weakened accents evinced how fearfully the remembrance he called up affected him. "What remains, too, more immediately concerns myself than others. I am the last of my house; an ancient family, and one not undistinguished in the annals of France, hangs but on the feeble thread of a withered and broken old man's life, with whom it dies; my only brother fell in the Austrian campaign. I never had a sister; uncles and cousins I have had in numbers, but death and exile have been rife these last twenty years, and, save myself, none bears the name of D'Auvergne. Yet once I nourished the hope of a family—of a race who should hand down the ancient virtues of our house to after years. I thought of those gallant ancestors whose portraits graced the walls of the old château I was born in, and fancied myself leading my infant boy from picture to picture, as I pointed out the brave and the good, who had been his forefathers. But this is a dream long since dispelled. I was then a youth, scarce older than yourself, rich, and with every prospect of happiness before me; I fell in love, and the object of my passion seemed one created to have made the very paradise I sought for. She was beautiful, beyond even the loveliest of a handsome Court; high-born and gifted; but her heart was bestowed on another—one who, unlike myself, encouraged no daring thoughts, no ambitious longings, but who, wholly devoted to her he loved, sought in tranquil quiet the happiness such spirits can give each other. She told me herself frankly, as I speak now to you, that she could not be mine, and then placed my hand in her husband's. This was Marie de Rochefort, the mother of Mademoiselle de Meudon.

"The world's changes seem ever to bring about these strange vicissitudes by which our early deeds of good and

evil are brought more forcibly to our memories, and we are made to think over the past by some accident of the present. After twenty years I came to live in that *château* where she whom I once loved had lived and died. I became the lord of that estate which her husband once possessed, and where in happiness they had dwelt together. I will not dwell upon the thoughts such associations ever give rise to; I dare not, old as I am, evoke them." He paused for some minutes, and then went on: "Two years ago I learned that *Mademoiselle de Meudon* was the daughter of my once loved *Marie*. From that hour I felt no longer childless; I watched over her, without, however, attracting notice on her part, and followed her everywhere; the very day I saw you first at the *Polytechnique* I was beside her. From all I could learn and hear, her life had been one of devoted attachment to her brother, and then to *Madame Bonaparte*; her heart, it was said, was buried with him she once loved; at least none since had ever won even the slightest acknowledgment from her bordering on encouragement.

"Satisfied that she was everything I could have wished my own daughter, and feeling that with youth the springs of affection rarely dry up, I conceived the idea of settling all my property on her, and entreating the Emperor to make me her guardian, with her own consent of course. He agreed; he went further; he repealed, so far as it concerned her, the law by which the daughters of royalists cannot inherit, and made her eligible to succeed to property, and placed her hand at my disposal.

"Such was the state of matters when I wrote to you; since that I have seen her, and spoken to her in confidence; she has consented to every portion of the arrangement, save that which involves her marrying; but some strange superstition being over her mind that her fate is to ruin all with whom it is linked, that her name carries an evil destiny with it, she refuses every offer of marriage, and will not yield to my solicitation.

"I thought," said the general, as he leaned on his hand, and muttered half aloud, "that I had conceived a plan which must bring happiness with it; but, however, one part of my design is accomplished—she is my heir, the daughter of my own loved *Marie* is the child of my

adoption, and for this I have reason to feel grateful. The cheerless feeling of a death-bed where not one mourns for the dying, haunts me no longer, and I feel not as one deserted and alone. To-morrow I go to wish her adieu; and we are to be at the Tuileries by noon. The Emperor holds a levée, and our final orders will then be given."

The old general rallied at the last few words he spoke, and pressing my hand affectionately, wished me good night, and withdrew; while I, with a mind confused and stunned, sat thinking over the melancholy story he had related, and sorrowing over the misfortunes of one whose lot in life had been far sadder than my own.



CHAPTER XLII.

THE HALL OF THE MARSHALS.

SOME minutes before noon we entered the Place du Carrousel, now thronged with equipages and led horses. Officers, in the rich uniforms of every arm of the service, were pressing their way to the palace, amid the crash of carriages, the buzz of recognitions, and the thundering sounds of the brass band, whose echo was redoubled beneath the vaulted vestibule of the palace.

Borne along with the torrent, we mounted the wide stair and passed from room to room, until we arrived at the great antechamber where the officers of the household were assembled in their splendid dresses. Here the crowd was so dense we were unable to move on for some time, and it was after nearly an hour's waiting that we at last found ourselves within that gorgeous gallery named by the Emperor "La Salle des Maréchaux." At any other moment my attention had been riveted upon the

magnificence and beauty of this great *salon*, its pictures, its gildings, the richness of the hangings, the tasteful elegance of the ceiling, with its tracery of dull gold, the great works of art in bronze and marble that adorned it on every side ; but now my mind took another and very different range. Here around me were met the greatest generals and warriors of Europe—the names second alone to his who had no equal. There stood Ney, with his broad, retiring forehead, and his eyes black and flashing, like an eagle's. With what energy he spoke! how full of passionate vigour that thick and rapid utterance, that left a tremulous quivering on his lip even when he ceased to speak! What a contrast to the bronzed, unmoved features of the large man he addressed, and who listened to him with such deference of manner ; his yellow moustache bespeaks not the Frenchman, he is a German, by blood at least, for it is Kellerman, the colonel of the cuirassiers of the Guard. And yonder was Soult, with his strong features seamed by many a day of hardship, the centre of a group of colonels of the staff, to whom he was rapidly communicating their orders. Close beside him stood Lannes, his arm in a sling ; a gun-shot wound that defied the art of the surgeons still deprived him of his left hand. And there leaned Savary against the window, his dark eyes riveted on the corps of gendarmerie in the court beneath. Full taller by a head than the largest about him, he seemed almost gigantic in the massive accoutrements of his service. The fierce Davoust ; the gay and splendid Murat, with his waving plumes and jewelled dolman ; Lefebvre, the very type of his class, moving with difficulty from a wound in his hip—all were there ; while passing rapidly from place to place, I remarked a young and handsome man, whose uniform of colonel bore the decoration of the Legion ; he appeared to know and be known to all : this was Eugène Beauharnais, the stepson of the Emperor. "Ah, General d'Auvergne," cried he, approaching with a smile, "his Majesty desires to see you after the levée. You leave to-night, I believe?"

"Yes, colonel, all is in readiness," said the general, while I thought a look of anxiety at the Emperor's summons seemed to agitate his features.

“One of your staff?” said Beauharnais, bowing, as he looked towards me.

“My aide-de-camp, Lieutenant Burke,” replied the general, presenting me.

“Ah! I remember,” said the colonel, as he drew himself proudly up, and seemed as though the recollection were anything but favourable to me. But just then the wide folding-doors were thrown open, and a loud voice proclaimed, “*Sa Majesté l'Empereur!*” In an instant every voice was hushed, the groups broke up, and fell back into two long lines, between which lay a passage; along this the officers of the palace retired slowly, facing the Emperor, who came step by step after them. I could but see the pale face, massive and regular, like the head of an antique cameo; the hair combed straight upon his fine forehead, and his large, full eyes, as they turned hither and thither among that crowd, once his equals, now how immeasurably his inferiors! He stopped every now and then to say a word or two to some one as he passed, but in so low a tone that, even in the dead silence around, nothing was audible save a murmur. It was a relief to my own excited feelings as, with high, beating heart, I gazed on the greatest monarch of the world, that I beheld the others around, the oldest generals, the time-worn companions of his battles, not less moved than myself.

While the Emperor passed slowly along, I could mark that Eugène Beauharnais moved rapidly through the gallery, whispering now to this one, now to that, among the officers of superior grade, who, immediately after, left the *salon* by a door at the end. At length he approached General d'Auvergne, saying:—

“The audience of the marshals will not occupy more than half an hour; pray be in readiness to wait on his Majesty when he calls. You can remain in the blue drawing-room next the gallery.”

The general bowed, and, taking my arm, moved slowly from the spot in the direction mentioned, and in a few minutes we found ourselves in the small room where the Empress used to receive her morning visitors during the Consulate.

“You remember this *salon*, Burke?” said the general, carelessly.

"Yes, sir, but too well; it was here that his Majesty gave me that rebuke——"

"True, true, my dear boy; I forgot that completely. But come, there has been time enough to forget it since. I wonder what can mean this summons to attend here!—I have received my orders—there has been, so far as I understand, no change of plan. Well, well, we shall soon know—see, the levée has begun to break up already—there goes the staff of the artillery—that roll of the drum is for some general of division."

And now the crash of carriages, and the sounds of cavalry escorts, jingling beside them, mingled with the deep beating of the drums, made a mass of noises that filled the air, and continued without interruption for above an hour.

"*Sacristi!*" cried the general, "the crowd seems to pour in as fast as it goes out. This may last for the entire day. I have scarce two hours left me now."

He walked the room impatiently, now muttering some broken words to himself, now stopping to listen to the sounds without. Still the din continued, and the distant roll of equipages, growing louder as they came, told that the tide was yet pressing onwards towards the palace. "Three o'clock," cried the general, as the bell of the pavilion sounded; "at four I was to leave; such were my written orders, signed by the minister."

His impatience now became extreme. He knew how difficult it was, in a matter of military discipline, to satisfy Napoleon that any breach, even when caused by his direct orders, was not a fault. Besides, his old habits had taught him to respect a command from the Minister of War as something above all others.

"Beauharnais must have mistaken," said he, angrily. "His Majesty gave me my final directions. I'll wait no longer."

Yet did he hesitate to leave, and seemed actually to rely on me for some hint for his guidance. I did not dare to offer a suggestion, and while thus we both stood uncertain, the door opened, and a *huissier* called out,—

"Lieutenant-General d'Auvergne—this way, sir," said the official, as he threw open a folding-door into a long

gallery that looked into the garden. They passed out together, and I was alone.

The agitation of the general at this unexpected summons had communicated itself to me, but in a far different way; for I imagined that his Majesty desired only to confer some mark of favour on the gallant old general before parting with him. Yet did I not venture to suggest this to him, for fear I should be mistaken.

While I revolved these doubts in my mind, the door was flung open with a crash, and a page, in the uniform of the Court, rushed in.

"May I ask, sir," cried he, breathlessly, "can you inform me where is the aide-de-camp of the General d'Auvergne—I forget the name, unfortunately?"

"I am the person—Lieutenant Burke."

"The same; that is the name. Come after me with all haste—this way." And so saying, he rushed down a flight of stone stairs, clearing six or seven at a spring.

"A hurried business this, lieutenant," said the page, laughingly. "Took them all by surprise, I fancy."

"What is it?—What do you mean?" asked I, eagerly.

"Hush!" said he, placing his fingers on his lips; "here they come."

We had just time to stand to one side of the gallery, as the officers of the household came up, two and two, followed by the Chancellor of France, and the Dean of St. Roch, in his full canonicals. They approached the table, on which several papers and documents were lying, and proceeded to sign their names to different writings before them. While I looked on, puzzled and amazed, totally unable to make the most vague conjecture of the nature of the proceedings, I perceived that General d'Auvergne had entered the room, and was standing among the rest at the table.

"Whose signature do you propose here, General?" said the Chancellor, as he took up a paper before him.

"My aide-de-camp, Lieutenant Burke."

"He is here, sir," said the page, stepping forward.

"You are to sign your name here, sir, and again on this side," said the Chancellor, "with your birthplace annexed, age, and rank in the service."

"I am a foreigner," said I; "does that make any difference here?"

"None," said he, smiling; "the witness is but a very subordinate personage here."

I took the pen, and proceeded to write as I was desired; and, while thus engaged, the door opened, and a short, heavy step crossed the room. I did not dare to look up; some secret feeling of terror ran through me, and told me it was the Emperor himself.

"Well, D'Auvergne," said he, in a frank, bold way, quite different from his ordinary voice, "you seem but half content with this plan of mine. *Pardieu!* there's many a brave fellow would not deem the case so hard a one."

"As your wish, sire——"

"As mine, *diantre!* my friend; do not say mine only; you forget that the lady expressed herself equally satisfied. Come! is the *acte* completed?"

"It wants but your Majesty's signature," said the Chancellor.

The Emperor took the pen, and dashed some indescribable scroll across the paper; then turning suddenly towards the general, he conversed with him eagerly for several minutes, but in so low a voice as not to be audible where I stood. I could but catch the words "Darmstadt—Augsburg—the fourth corps," from which it seemed the movements of the army were the subject; when he added, in a louder voice,—

"Every hour now is worth a day, ay, a week, hereafter. Remember that, D'Auvergne."

"Everything is finished, sire," said the Chancellor, handing the folded papers to the Emperor.

"These are for your keeping, general," said he, delivering them into D'Auvergne's hand.

"Pardon, sire," said the Chancellor, hastily, "I have made a great error here. Madame la Comtesse has not appended her signature to the consent."

"Indeed!" said the Emperor, smiling. "We have been too hasty, it would seem; so thinks our reverend father of Saint Roch, I perceive, who is evidently not accustomed to officiate *au coup de tambour.*"

"Her Majesty the Empress!" said the *huissier*, as he

opened the doors to permit her to enter. She was dressed in full Court dress, covered with jewels. She held within her arm the hand of another, over whose figure a deep veil was thrown, that entirely concealed her from head to foot.

“Madame la Comtesse will have the kindness to sign this,” said the Chancellor, as he handed over a pen to the lady. She threw back her veil as he spoke. As she turned towards the table, I saw the pale, almost deathlike features of Marie de Meudon. Such was the shock, I scarce restrained a cry from bursting forth, and a film fell before my eyes as I looked, and the figures before me floated like masses of vapour before my sight.

The Empress now spoke to the general, but no longer could I take notice of what was said. Voices there were, but they conveyed nothing to my mind. A terrible rush of thoughts, too quick for perception, chased each other through my brain, and I felt as though my temples were bursting open from some pressure within. Suddenly the general moved forward, and knelt to kiss the Empress’s hand; he then took that of Mademoiselle de Meudon, and held it to his lips. I heard the word “Adieu!” faintly uttered by her low voice; the veil fell once more over her features; that moment a stir followed, and in a few minutes more we were descending the stairs alone, the general leaning on my arm, his right hand pressed across his eyes. When we reached the court, several officers of rank pressed forward, and I could hear the buzz of phrases implying congratulations and joy, to which the old general replied briefly, and with evident depression of manner. The dreadful oppression of a sad dream was over me still, and I felt as though to awake were impossible, when, to some remark near him, the general replied,—

“True! quite true, monseigneur; I have made her my wife. There only remains one reparation for it, which is to make her my widow.”

“His wife!” said I, aloud, re-echoing the word without knowing.

“Even so, *mon ami*,” said he, pressing my hand softly. “My name and my fortune are both hers. As for myself—we shall never meet again.” He turned away his head

as he spoke, nor uttered another word during the remainder of the way.

When we arrived at the Rue de Rohan the horses were harnessed to the carriage, and all in readiness for our departure. The rumour of expected war had brought a crowd of idlers about the door, through which we passed with some difficulty into the house. Hastily throwing an eye over the now dismantled room, the old general approached the window that looked out upon the Tuileries. "Adieu!" muttered he to himself; "*je ne vous reverrai jamais!*" And with that he pressed his travelling-cap over his brows, and descended the stairs.

A cheer burst from the mob—the postilion's whip cracked loudly—the horses dashed over the pavement—and, ere the first flurry of mad excitement had subsided from my mind, Paris was some miles behind us, and we were hastening on towards the frontier.

Almost every man has experienced at least one period of his life when the curtain seems to drop, and the drama in which he has hitherto acted to end; when a total change appears to pass over the interests he has lived among, and a new and very different kind of existence to open before him. Such is the case when the death of friends has left us alone and companionless; when they, into whose ears we poured our whole thoughts of sorrow or of joy, are gone, and we look around upon the bleak world, without a tie to existence, without one hope to cheer us. How naturally then do we turn from every path and place once lingered over; how do we fly the thoughts wherein once consisted our greatest happiness, and seek, from other sources, impressions less painful, because unconnected with the past. Still the bereavement of death is never devoid of a sense of holy calm, a sort of solemn peace connected with the memory of the lost one. In the sleep that knows no waking, we see the end of earthly troubles—in the silence of the grave come no sounds of this world's contention—the winds that stir the rank grass of the churchyard breathe, at least, repose. Not so when fate has severed us from those we loved best during lifetime; when the fortunes we hoped to link with our own are torn asunder from us; when the hour comes when we must turn from the path

we had followed with pleasure and happiness, and seek another road in life, bearing with us not only all the memory of the past, but all the speculation on the future. There is no sorrow, no affliction, like this.

It was thus I viewed my joyless fortune—with such depressing reflections I thought over the past. What mattered it now how my career might turn, there lived not one to care whether rank or honour, disgrace or death, were to be my portion. The glorious path I often longed to tread opened for me now without exciting one spark of enthusiasm: so is it even in our most selfish desires, we live less for ourselves than others.

If my road in life seemed to present few features to hang hopes on, he who sat beside me appeared still more depressed. Seldom speaking, and then but in monosyllables, he remained sunk in reverie. And thus passed the days of our journey, when, on the third evening, we came in sight of Coblenz. Then indeed there burst upon my astonished gaze one of those scenes which, once seen, are never forgotten. From the gentle declivity which we were now descending, the view extended several miles in every direction. Beneath us lay the city of Coblenz, its spires and domes shining like gilded bronze as the rays of the setting sun fell upon them; the Moselle swept along one side of the town till it mingled its eddies with the broad Rhine, now one sheet of liquid gold; the long pontoon bridge, against whose dark cutwaters the bright stream broke in sparkling circles, trembled beneath the dull roll of artillery and baggage-waggons, which might be seen issuing from the town, and serpentineing their course along the river's edge for miles, till they were lost in the narrow glen by which the Lahn flows into the Rhine; beyond rose the great precipice of rock, with its crowning fortress of Ehrenbreitstein, along whose battlemented walls, almost lost in the heavy clouds of evening, might be seen dark specks moving from place to place—the soldiers of the garrison looking down from their eyrie on the war-tide that flowed beneath. Lower down the river many boats were crossing, in which, as the sunlight shone, one could mark the glancing of arms and the glitter of uniforms; while farther again, and in deep shadow, rose the solitary towers of the ruined castle of Lahneck, its shattered walls

and grass-grown battlements standing clearly out against the evening sky.

Far as we were off, every breeze that stirred bore towards us the softened swell of military music, which, even when too faint to trace, made the air tremulous with its martial sounds. Along the ramparts of the city were crowds of townspeople, gazing with anxious wonderment at the spectacle; for none knew, save the generals in command of divisions, the destination of that mighty force, the greatest Europe had ever seen up to that period. Such indeed were the measures taken to ensure secrecy, that none were permitted to cross the frontier without a special authority from the Minister for Foreign Affairs; the letters in the various post-offices were detained, and even travellers were denied post-horses on the great roads to the eastward, lest intelligence might be conveyed to Germany of the movement in progress. Meanwhile, at Manheim, at Spire, at Strasburg, and at Coblenz, the long columns streamed forth whose eagles were soon destined to meet in the great plains of Southern Germany. Such was the gorgeous spectacle that each moment grew more palpable to our astonished senses—more brilliant far than anything painting could realize—more spirit-stirring than the grandest words that poet ever sang.

"The cuirassiers and the dragoons of the Guard are yonder," said the general, as he directed his glass to a large square of the town, where a vast mass of dismounted cavalry were standing; "you see how punctual they are; we are but two hours behind our time, and they are awaiting our arrival."

"And do we move forward to-night, general?" asked I, in some surprise.

"Yes, and every night. The marches are to be made fourteen hours each day. There go the Lancers of Berg—you see their scarlet dolmans, don't you? and yonder, in the three large boats, beyond the point, there are the sappers of the Guard. What are the shouts I hear?—whence comes that cheering?"

"Oh, I see—it's a vivandière; her horse has backed into the river. See—see!—she is going to swim him over! Look how the current takes him down. Bravely done, faith! She heads him to the stream—it won't do,

though; she must be carried down." Just at this critical moment, a boat shoots out from under the cliff—a few strokes of the oars, and they are alongside. There's a splash and a shout, and the skiff moves on. "And now I see they have given her a rope, and are towing her and her horse across."

"See how the old spirit comes back with the first blast of the trumpet," said the old general, as his eyes flashed with enthusiasm. "That damsel there—I'll warrant ye—she'd have thought twice about stepping over a rivulet in the streets of Paris yesterday, and look at her now. Well done! gallantly done! See how she spurs him up the bank! *Ma foi*, mademoiselle, you'll have no lack of lovers for that achievement."

A few minutes more and we entered the town, whose streets were thronged with soldiers hurrying on to their different corps, and eager townfolk asking a hundred questions, to which, of course, few waited to reply.

"This way, general," said an officer in undress, who recognized General d'Auvergne. "The cavalry of the third division is stationed on the square."

Driving through a narrow street, through which the calèche had barely room to pass, we now found ourselves in the Place, a handsome space surrounded with a double row of trees, under which the dragoons were lying, holding the bridles of their horses.

The general had scarcely put foot to ground when the trumpets sounded the call. The superior officers came running forward to greet him. Taking the arm of a short man in the uniform of the cuirassiers, the general entered a café near, while I became the centre of some dozen officers, all eagerly asking the news from Paris, and whether the Emperor had yet left the capital. It was not without considerable astonishment I then perceived how totally ignorant they all were of the destination of the army—many alleging it was designed for Russia, and others equally positive that the Prussians were the object of attack; the arguments in support of each opinion being wonderfully ingenious, and only deficient in one respect, having not a particle of fact for their foundation. In the midst of these conjecturings came a new subject for discussion, for one of the group who had just received a letter

from his brother, a page at the Tuileries, was reading the contents aloud for the benefit of the rest :

" Jules says that they are all astray as to the Emperor's movements ; Duroc has left Paris suddenly, but no one knows for where ; the only thing certain is, a hot campaign is to open somewhere. One hundred and eighty thousand men——"

" Bah ! " said an old, white-moustached major, with a look of evident unbelief ; " we never had forty with the army of the Sambre."

" And what then ? " said another, fiercely ; " do you compare your army of the Sambre, your sans-culottes republicans, with the Imperial troops ? "

The old major's face became deeply crimsoned, and with a muttered "*A demain*," he walked away.

" Go after him, Amédée," said another ; " you had no right to say that."

" Not I, faith," said the other, carelessly ; " there is a grudge between us these three weeks past, and we may as well have it out. Go on with the letter, Henri."

" Oh, it is filled with Court gossip," said the reader, negligently. " Ha ! what is this, though—the postscript :

" ' I have just time to tell you the strangest bit of news we have chanced upon for some time past. The Emperor has this moment married old General d'Auvergne to the very handsomest girl in the Empress's suite, Mademoiselle de Meudon. There is a rumour afloat about the old man having made her his heir, and desiring to confer her hand on some young fellow of his own choosing ; but this passion to make Court matches, which has seized his Majesty lately, stops at nothing ; and it is whispered that old Madame d'Orvalle is actually terrified at every levée, lest she should be disposed of to one of the new marshals. I must say that the general looks considerably put out by the arrangement ; not unnaturally, perhaps, as he is likely to pass the honeymoon in the field ; while his aide-de-camp, a certain Monsieur Burke, whose name you may remember figuring in the affair of Pichegru and George——'

" Perhaps it were as well, sir," said I, quietly, " that I should tell you the person alluded to is myself. I have no desire to learn how your correspondent speaks of me ; nor, I take it for granted, do these gentlemen desire to

canvass me in my own hearing; with your leave, then, I shall withdraw."

"A word, monsieur, one word, first," said the officer, whose insolent taunt had already offended the veteran major; "we are most of us here staff officers, and I need not say accustomed to live pretty much together. Will you favour us, then, with a little explanation as to the manner in which you escaped a trial in that business: your name, if I mistake not, did not figure before the tribunal after the first day?"

"Well, sir; and then?"

"And then? why there is one only explanation in such a circumstance."

"And that is? if I may be so bold——"

"That the *mouchard* fares better than his victim."

"I believe, sir," said I, "I comprehend your meaning; I hope there will be no fear of your mistaking mine." With that I drew off the long gauntlet glove I wore, and struck him across the face.

Every man sprang backwards as I did so, as though a shell had fallen in the midst of us; while a deep voice called out from behind,—

"Le Capitaine Amédée Pichot is under arrest."

I turned, and beheld the provost-marshal with his guard approach, and take my adversary's sword from him.

"What charge is this, marshal?" said he, as a livid colour spread over his cheek.

"Your duel of yesterday, capitaine; you seem to forget all about it already."

"Whenever and wherever you please, sir," said I, passing close beside him, and speaking in a whisper.

He nodded without uttering a word in reply, and moved after the guard, while the others dispersed silently, and left me standing alone in the Place.

What would I not have given at that moment for but one friend to counsel and advise me: and yet, save the general, to whom I dared not speak on such a subject, I had not one in the whole world. It was, indeed, but too true, that life had little value for me; yet never did I contemplate a duel with more abhorrence. The insult I had inflicted, however, could have no other result. While

I reasoned thus, the door of the café opened, and the general appeared.

"Burke," cried he, "come in here, and make a hasty supper; you must be in the saddle in half an hour."

"Quite ready, sir."

"I know it, my lad. Your orders are there: ride forward to Ettingen, and prepare the billets for the fourth demi-brigade, which will reach that village by to-morrow evening; you'll have time for something to eat, and a glass of wine before the orderly arrives. This piece of duty is put on you, because a certain Captain Pichot, the only one of the commissaries' department who can speak German, has just been put under arrest for a duel he fought yesterday. I wish the court-martial would shoot the fellow, with all my heart and soul; he's a perfect curse to the whole division. In any case, if he escape this time, I'll keep my eye on him, and he'll scarce get clear through my hands, I'll warrant him."

It may be supposed that I heard these words with no common emotion, bearing as they did so closely on my own circumstances at the moment; but I hung down my head and affected to eat, while the old general walked hastily up and down the *salon*, muttering, half aloud, heavy denunciations on the practice of duelling, which, at any cost of life, he resolved to put down in his command.

"Done already! why, man, you've eaten nothing. Well, then, I see the orderly without; you've got a capital moonlight for your ride; and so, *au revoir*."

"Good-bye, sir," said I, as I sprang into the saddle; "and now for Ettingen."



CHAPTER XLIII.

THE MARCH ON THE DANUBE.

THERE is a strange, unnatural kind of pleasure felt sometimes in the continued attacks of evil fortune: the dogged courage with which we bear up against the ills of fate, swimming more strongly as the waves grow rougher, has its own meed of consolation. It is only at such a time, perhaps, that the really independent spirit of our natures is in the ascendant, and that we can stand amid the storm, conscious of our firmness, and bid the winds "blow and crack their cheeks." Yet, through how many sorrows must one have waded, ere he reach this point—through what trials must he have passed—how must hope have paled, and flickered, and died out—how must all self-love, all ambition, all desire itself have withered within us—till we become like the mere rock amid the breakers, against which the waves beat in vain! When that hour comes, the heart has grown cold and callous—the affections have dried up—and man looks no more upon his fellow-men as brothers. Towards this sad condition I found myself rapidly verging; the isolation of my homeless, friendless state—the death of my hopes—the uncheered path in which I walked—all conspired to make me feel depressed, and I perceived that a half-recklessness was already stealing over me, and that, in my indifference as to fortune, now lay my greatest consolation. There was a time when such a rencontre as lately befell me had made me miserable till the hour came when I should meet my adversary; now, my blood boiled with no indignant passion—no current of angry vengeance stirred through my veins—a stupid sullenness was over me, and I cared nothing what might happen. And if this state became not permanent, I owe it to youth alone—the mainspring of many of our best endeavours.

We had travelled some seven or eight miles, when we stopped for a few seconds at the door of a *cafaret*, and then I discovered for the first time that my old friend Pioche was the corporal of our little party. To my slight reproach for his not having sooner made himself known to me, the honest fellow replied that he saw I was low in spirits about something, and did not wish to obtrude upon me. "Not but, after all, *mon lieutenant*, the best way is always to 'face front' against bad luck, and charge through—*sapermint*, that's the way we did at Marengo, when Desaix's corps was cut off from the left— But pardon, *mon officier*, I forgot you were not there." There was something so pleasant in the gruff courtesy of the hardy cuirassier, that I willingly led him on to speak of his former life—a subject which, once entered on, he followed as fancy or memory suggested.

"I used to feel low-spirited myself, once," said Pioche, as he smoothed down his great moustache with a complacent motion of his fingers—"I used to be very low in heart when I entered the service first, and saw all my old school-fellows and companions winning their epaulettes and becoming captains and colonels—ay, *parbleu*, and *maréchals*, too—while, because I could not read, I was to remain all my life in the ranks—as if one could not force a palisade, nor break through a square, till he had stuffed his head with learning. All this made me very sad, and I would sit brooding over it for hours long; but at last I began to think my own lot was not the worst after all—my duty was easily done, and, when over, I could sleep sound till the *réveil* blew. I ran no danger of being scolded by the *Petit Caporal*, because my division was not somewhere yesterday, nor in some other place to-day. He never came with a frown to ask me why I had not captured another howitzer, and taken more prisoners. No, faith! It was always, 'Well done, Pioche—bravely done, *mon enfant*!—here's a piece of twenty francs to drink my health.' Or, perhaps, he'd mutter between his teeth,—'That honest fellow there would make a better general than one-half of them'—not that he was in earnest, you know—but still it was pleasant just to hear it."

"And yet, Pioche," said I, "it does surprise me why, seeing that this want of learning was the bar to your promotion, you did not——"

“And so I did, *mon lieutenant*; at least I tried to learn to read. *Morbleu!* it was a weary time for me. I'd rather be under arrest three days a week, than be at it again. Mademoiselle Minette—she was the *vivandière* of ours—undertook to teach me; and I used to go over to the canteen every evening after drill. Many a sad heart had I over these same lessons. *Saprelotte*, I could learn the look of every man in a brigade before I could know the letters in the alphabet, they looked so confoundedly alike when they stood up all in a line. The only fellows I could distinguish were the big ones, that were probably the sergeants and *sous-officiers*; and when my eye was fixed on one column, it would stray away to another, and then mademoiselle would laugh—and that would lead to something else. *Et, ma foi*, the spelling-book was soon thrown aside, and lessons given up for that evening.”

“I suppose Mademoiselle Minette was pretty, Pioche?”

“Was! ay, and is, too. What! *mon lieutenant*, did you never see her on parade? She's the handsomest girl in the army, and rides so well—*mille canons!* She might have been a great lady before this if she'd have left the regiment—but no, she'd die first! Her father was tambour-major with us, and killed at Groningen, when she was only an infant—and we used to carry her about in our arms on the march, and hand her from one to another. I have seen her pass from the leading files to the baggage-guard, on a long summer's day—that I have. Le Petit Caporal knows her well—she gave him a gourd full of eau-de-vie at Cairo, when he was so faint he could scarcely speak. It was after that he saw her in the breach at Acre—one of our fellows was lying wounded in the ruins, and mademoiselle waited till the storming party fell back, and then ran up to him with her flask in her hand. ‘Whose pretty ankles are these? I think I ought to know them,’ said an officer, as she passed along. ‘No flattery will do with me, monsieur,’ cried Minette; it's hard enough to get one's living here, without giving Nantz brandy for nothing.’ *Sacristi!* when the laugh made her turn about, she saw it was the Petit Caporal himself who spoke to her. Poor Minette! she blushed scarlet, and nearly dropped with shame, but that did not prevent her dashing up the breach towards the wounded man; not

that it was of any use, though—he was dead when she got up."

"I should like much to see mademoiselle. Is she still with the Fourth?"

"Yes, *mon lieutenant*; I parted with her a few hours ago. A half suppressed sigh that followed these words showed that the worthy corporal was touched on the most tender key of his nature, and for some time he lapsed into a silence I could not venture to break. At length, desiring to give the conversation a turn, I asked if he knew the Capitaine Pichot.

"Know him!" cried Pioche, almost bounding in his saddle as he spoke. "That I do. *Peste!* I have good reason to know him. See there." With that he lifted the curled moustache from his upper lip, and disclosed to my view a blue scar that marked one side of his mouth. "That was his doing."

"Indeed! How so, pray?"

"I'll tell you; we were in garrison at Metz, where, as you know, the great commissariat station is held—thousands of cannon and mortars, shells and shot, and tons of powder without end. Well, the orders were very strict against smoking—any man found with a pipe in his mouth was sentenced to a week in the 'salle de police,' and I can't say what else besides. When we marched into the town this order stared us in the face—a great placard, with big letters, which they who could read said was against smoking. Now, most of us came from Alsace, and it was pretty much like setting a fish to live on dry land, bidding us go without tobacco. As for me, I smoke just as I breathe, without knowing or thinking of it. My pipe lies in my mouth as naturally as my foot rests in the stirrup; and so, although I intended to obey the order, I knew well the time might come when, just from not thinking, I should be caught smoking away—for if I were on guard over a magazine it would be all the same—I could not help it. So I resolved, as the only way not to be caught tripping, to leave all my pipes in a secret place, till the time came for us to leave Metz—an hour, I need not say, we all anxiously longed for. This I did," continued Pioche, "that same evening, and all went on favourably for some time, when one night, as I was returning to

quarters, the devil, who meddles with everything in this world, made me stick my hands into the pocket of my undress jacket, and I there discovered a little bit of a pipe about the length of one joint of your thumb—a poor scrubby thing of clay, sure enough—but there it was, and, worse still, ready filled with tobacco. Had it been a good-sized meerschaum, with a tassel and an amber mouthpiece, I had resisted like a man; but the temptation came in so humble a shape, I thought I was only guilty of a small sin in transgressing, and so I lit my little friend, and went gaily along towards the barracks. Just as I passed the corner of the market-place I heard a great noise of voices and laughing in the café, and recognized the tones of our major and some of the officers; as they sat sipping their wine in the verandah. Before I could raise my hand to my mouth, Capitaine Pichot cried out—‘*Halte là! —*right about face—attention!—left wheel—eyes front.’ This I did, as if on parade, and stood stock still—when suddenly crack went a noise, and a pistol-bullet smashed the pipe in two, and grazed my lip, when a roar of laughing followed, as he called out louder than before—‘Quick march!’—and I stepped out to my quarters, never turning my head right or left, not knowing what other ball practice might be in store for me. *Tonnerre de Dieu!* a little windage of the shot might have cost me every tooth I have in the world!”

“It was a cruel jest, Pioche, and you’re a good-humoured fellow to take it so easily.”

“Not so, lieutenant. I had no punishment afterwards, and was well content to be quit for the fright!”

With such stray memories of his campaigning days did Pioche beguile the way—now moralizing over the chances and changes of a soldier’s fortune—now comforting himself with some pleasant reflection that, even in his own humble walk, he had assisted at some of the greatest triumphs of the French armies. Of the future he spoke with the easy confidence of one who felt that in the Emperor’s guidance there could be full trust—both of the cause being a just one, and the result victorious. A perfect type of his class, his bravery was only to be equalled by the implicit confidence he felt in his leader. That the troops of any country, no matter how numerous and well

equipped, could resist a French army, was a problem he could not even entertain. The thing was too absurd: and if Napoleon did not at that moment wield undisputed sway over the whole of Europe, it was simply owing to his excess of moderation, and the willing sacrifice of his ambition to his greater love of liberty.

I confess, if I were sometimes tempted to smile at the simplicity of the honest soldier, I was more often carried away by his warm enthusiasm; so frequently, too, did he interweave in his narrative the mention of those great victories, whose fame was unquestionable, that, in my assent to the facts, I went a great way in my concurrence with the inferences he deduced from them. And thus we travelled on for several days, in advance of the division, regulating the halting-places and the billets, according to the nature and facilities of the country. The towns and villages in our "route" presented an aspect of the most profound peace; and however strange it seemed, yet each day attested how completely ignorant the people were of the advance of that mighty army that now, in four vast columns of march, was pouring its thousands into the heart of Germany. The Princes of Baden and Darmstadt, through whose territories we passed, had not as yet given in their adherence to the Emperor; and the inhabitants of those countries seemed perplexed and confused at the intentions of their powerful neighbour, whose immense trains of ammunition, and enormous parks of artillery, filled every road, and blocked up every village.

At length we reached Manheim, where a portion of the corps of Maréchal Davoust were in waiting to join us: and there we first learned, by the imperial bulletin, the object of the war, and the destination of the troops. The document was written by Napoleon himself, and bore abundant evidence of his style. After the usual programme, attesting his sincere love for peace, and his desire for the cultivation of those happy and industrious habits which make nations more prosperous than glorious, it went on to speak of the great coalition between Russia and Austria, which, in union with the "*perfidie* Albion," had no other thought nor wish than the abasement and dismemberment of France. "But, soldiers!" continued he, "your Emperor is in the midst of you. France itself

in all its majesty, is at your back, and you are but the advanced guard of a mighty people! There are fatigues and privations, battles and forced marches, before you; but let them oppose to us every resistance they are able—we swear never to cry Halt! till we have planted our eagles on the territory of our enemies!”

We halted two days at Manheim to permit some regiments to come up, and then marched forward to Nordlingen, which place the Emperor himself had only quitted the night before. Here the report reached us that a smart affair had taken place the previous morning, between the Austrian division and a portion of Ney's advanced guard, in which we had rather the worst of it, and had lost some prisoners. The news excited considerable discontent among the troops, and increased their impatience to move forward to a very great degree. Meanwhile, the different divisions of the French army were converging towards Ulm, from the north, south, and west; and every hour brought them nearer to that devoted spot, which as yet, in the security of an enormous garrison, never dreamed of sudden attack.

The corps of Soult was now pushed forward to Augsburg, and, extended by a line of communication to Meiningen, the only channel of communication which remained open to the enemy. The *quartier-général* of the Emperor was established at Zummerhausen. Ney was at Guntzburg, Marmont threatened in the west, and Bernadotte, arriving by forced marches from Prussia, hovered in the north, so that Ulm was invested in every direction at one blow, and that in a space of time almost inconceivable.

While these immense combinations were being effected, requiring as they did an enormous extent of circumference to march over, before the fortress could be thus enclosed, as it were, within our grasp, our astonishment increased daily that the Austrians delayed to give battle; but, as if terror-stricken, they waited on, day after day, while the measures for their ruin were accomplishing. At length a desperate sortie was made from the garrison, and a large body of troops escaping by the left bank of the Danube, directed their course towards Bohemia; while another corps, in the opposite direction, forced back Ney's advanced guard, and took the road towards Nordlingen.

Having directed a strong detachment in pursuit of this latter corps, which was commanded by the Archduke Frederick himself, the Emperor closed in around Ulm, and, forcing the passage of the river at Elchingen, prepared for the final attack.

While these dispositions were being effected, the cavalry brigade, under General d'Auvergne, consisting of three regiments of heavy dragoons, the 4th Cuirassiers, and 8th Hussars, continued to descend the left bank of the Danube, in pursuit of a part of the Austrian garrison which had taken that line in retreat towards Vienna. We followed as far as Guntzburg without coming up with them, and there the news of the capitulation of Meiningen, with its garrison of six thousand men, to Maréchal Soult, reached us, along with an order to return to Ulm.

Up to this time all I had seen of war was forced marches, bivouacs hastily broken up, hurried movements in advance and retreat, the fatigue of night parties, and a continual alert. At first the hourly expectation of coming in sight of the enemy kept up our spirits; but when day after day passed, and the same pursuit followed, where the pursued never appeared, the younger soldiers grumbled loudly at fatigues undertaken without object, and, as it seemed to them, by mistake.

On the night of the 17th of October we bivouacked within a league of Ulm. Scarcely were the pickets formed for the night, when orders came for the whole brigade to assemble under arms at daybreak. A thousand rumours were abroad as to the meaning of the order, but none came near the true solution; indeed, the difficulty was increased by the added command, that the regiments should appear "*en grande tenue*," or in full dress. I saw that my old commander made a point of keeping me in suspense as to the morrow, and affected, as much as possible, an air of indifference on the subject. He had himself arrived late from Ulm, where he had seen the Emperor, and amused me by mentioning the surprise of an Austrian aide-de-camp, who, sent to deliver a letter, found his Majesty sitting with his boots off, and stretched before a bivouac fire.

"Yes," said Napoleon, divining at once his astonishment, "it is even so. Your master wished to remind me

of my old trade, and I hope that the imperial purple has not made me forget its lessons."

By daybreak the next morning our brigade was in the saddle, and in motion towards the *quartier-général*—a gently rising ground, surmounted by a farm-house, where the Emperor had fixed his quarters. As we mounted the hill we came in sight of the whole army drawn up in battle array. They stood in columns of divisions, with artillery and cavalry between them, the bands of the various regiments in front.

The day was a brilliant one, and heightened the effect of the scene. Beyond us lay Ulm—silent as if untenanted. Not a sentinel appeared on the walls; the very flag had disappeared from the battlements. Our surprise was great at this; but how was it increased as the rumour fled from mouth to mouth—"Ulm has capitulated: thirty-five thousand men have become prisoners of war!" Ere the first moments of wonder had ceased, the staff of the Emperor was seen passing along the line, and finally taking up its station on the hill, while the regimental bands burst forth into one crash the most spirit-stirring and exciting. The proud notes swelled and filled the air as the sun, bursting forth with increased brilliancy, tipped every helmet and banner, and displayed the mighty hosts in all the splendour of their pageantry. Beneath the hill stretched a vast plain in the direction of Neuburg, and here we at first supposed it was the Emperor's intention to review the troops; but a very different scene was destined to pass on that spot.

Suddenly a single gun boomed out, and as the lazy smoke moved heavily along the earth, the gates of Ulm opened, and the head of an Austrian column appeared. Not with beat of drum, or colours flying, did they advance—but slow in step, with arms reversed, and their heads downcast, they marched on towards the mound; defiling beneath this, they moved into the plain, and, corps by corps, piled their arms, and resumed their "route," the white line serpentining along the vast plain, and stretching away into the dim distance. Never was a sight so sad as this! All that war can present of suffering and bloodshed, all that the battle-field can show of dead and dying, were nothing to the miserable abasement

of those thousands, who from daybreak till noon poured on their unceasing tide.

On the hill beside the Emperor stood several officers in white uniform, whose sad faces and suffering looks attested the misery of their hearts. "Better a thousand deaths than such humiliation!" was the muttered cry of every man about me; while in very sorrow at such a scene, the tears coursed down the hardy cheeks of many a bronzed soldier, and some turned away their heads, unable to behold the spectacle.

Seventy pieces of cannon, with a long train of ammunition waggons, and four thousand cavalry horses, brought up the rear of this melancholy procession—the spoils of the capitulation of Ulm. Truly, if that day were, as the imperial bulletin announced it, "one of the most glorious for France," it was also the darkest in the history of Austria—when thirty-two regiments of infantry and fifteen of cavalry, with artillery and siege defences of every kind, laid down their arms and surrendered themselves prisoners. Thus in fifteen days from the passing of the Rhine was the campaign begun and ended, and the Austrian Empire prostrate at the feet of Napoleon.



CHAPTER XLIV.

THE CANTEEN.

THE Emperor returned that night to Elchingen, accompanied by a numerous staff, among whom was the General d'Auvergne. I remember well the toilsome ascent of the steep town, which, built on a cliff above the Danube, was now little better than a heap of ruins, from the assault of Ney's division two days before. Scrambling our way over fallen houses and massive fragments of masonry, we reached the square that forms the highest point of the city; from thence we looked down upon the great plain, with the majestic Danube winding along for miles; in the valley lay Ulm—now sad and silent; no watch-fires blazed along its deserted ramparts, and through its open gates there streamed the idle tide of soldiers and camp followers, curious to see the place which once they had deemed almost impregnable. The *quartier-général* was established here, and the different staffs disposed of themselves, as well as they were able, throughout the houses near. Most of these, indeed, had been deserted by their inhabitants, whose dread of the French was a feeling ministered to by every artifice in the power of the Austrian Government. As for me, I was but a young campaigner, and might from sheer ignorance have passed my night in the open air, when by good fortune I caught sight of my old companion, Pioche, hurrying along a narrow street, carrying a basket well stored with bottles on his arm.

“*Ah, mon lieutenant*, you here, and not supped yet, I'd wager a crown?”

“You'd win it too, Pioche; nor do I see very great chance of my doing so.”

“Come along with me, sir; Mademoiselle Minette has just opened her canteen in the flower-market—such it was once, they tell me—but there is little odour left there now,

save such as contract powder gives. But no matter you'll have a roast capon and sausages, and some of the Austrian wine; I have just secured half a dozen bottles here."

I need scarcely say that this was an invitation there was no declining, and I joined the corporal at once, and hurried on to mademoiselle's quarters. We had not proceeded far, when the noise of voices speaking and singing in a loud tone announced that we were approaching the canteen.

"You hear them, *mon lieutenant*," said Pioche, with a look of delight, "you hear the rogues. *Par St. Jacques*, they know where to make themselves merry. Good wine for drinking, lodging for nothing, fire for the trouble of lighting it, are brave inducements to enjoy life."

"But it's a canteen; surely mademoiselle is paid?"

"Not the first night of a campaign, I suppose," said he, with a voice of rebuke. "*Parbleu!* that would be a pretty affair! No, no; each man brings what he can find, drinks what he is able, and leaves the rest—which, after all, is a very fair stock-in-trade to begin with; and so now, *mon lieutenant*, to commence operations regularly, just sling this ham on your sabre over your shoulder, and take this turkey carelessly in your hand—that's it—here we are—follow me."

Passing through an arched gateway, we entered a little courtyard where several horses were picketed, the ground about them being strewn with straw knee-deep; cavalry saddles, holsters, and sheep-skins, lay confusedly on every side, along with sabres and carbines; a great lamp, detached from its position over the street entrance, was suspended from a lance out of a window, and threw its light over the scene. Stepping cautiously through this chaotic heap, we reached a glass door, from within which the riotous sounds were most audibly issuing. Pioche pushed it open, and we entered a large room, full fifty feet in length, at one end of which, under a species of canopy, formed by two old regimental colours, sat Mademoiselle Minette—for so I guessed to be a very pretty brunette, with a most decidedly Parisian look about her air and toilette; a table, covered with a snow-white napkin, was in front of her, on which lay a large bouquet and an open

book, in which she appeared to be writing as we came in. The room on either side was filled by small tables, around which sat parties drinking, card-playing, singing, or quarrelling, as it might be, with a degree of energy and vociferation only campaigning can give an idea of.

The first thing which surprised me was, that all ranks in the service seemed confusedly mixed up together, there being no distinction of class whatever; captains and corporals, sergeants, lieutenants, colonels, and tambour-majors, were inextricably commingled, hob-nobbing, hand-shaking, and even kissing in turn; that most fraternal and familiar "Tu" of dearest friendship being heard on every side.

Resisting a hundred invitations to join some party or other as he passed up the room, Pioche led me forward towards Mademoiselle Minette, to present me in due form ere I took my place.

The honest corporal, who would have charged a square without blinking, seemed actually to tremble as he came near the pretty vivandière, and when, with a roguish twinkle of her dark eye, and a half smile on her saucy lip, she said, "*Ah, c'est toi, gros Pioche?*" the poor fellow could only mutter a "*Oui, mademoiselle,*" in a voice scarce loud enough to be heard.

"And monsieur," said she, "whom I have the honour to see?"

"Is my lieutenant, mademoiselle; or he is aide-de-camp of my general, which comes to the same thing."

With a few words of gracious civility, well and neatly expressed, mademoiselle welcomed me to the canteen, which, she said, had often been graced by the presence of General d'Auvergne himself.

"Yes, by St. Denis!" cried Pioche, with energy, "Prince Murat, and Maréchal Davoust, too, have been here." Dropping his voice to a whisper, he added something that called a faint blush to mademoiselle's cheek as she replied,—

"You think so, do you?" Then, turning to me, asked if I were not disposed to sup.

"Yes, that he is," interrupted Pioche, "and here is the *matériel*;" with which he displayed his pannier of bottles, and pointed to the spoils which, following his directions,

I carried in my hands. The corporal having despatched the fowls to the kitchen, proceeded to arrange a little table at a short distance from where mademoiselle sat—an arrangement, I could perceive, which called forth some rather angry looks from those around the room, and I could overhear more than one muttered *Sacré!* as to the ambitious pretensions of the "gros Pioche."

He himself paid little, if any, attention to these signs of discontent, but seemed wholly occupied in perfecting the table arrangements, which he did with the skill and despatch of a tavern waiter.

"Here, mon lieutenant, this is your place," said he, with a bow, as he placed a chair for me at the head of the board; and then, with a polite obeisance to the lady, he added, "*Avec permission, mademoiselle,*" and took his own seat at the side.

A very appetizing dish made its appearance at this moment, and notwithstanding my curiosity to watch the proceedings of the party, and my admiration for mademoiselle herself, hunger carried the day, and I was soon too deeply engaged in the discussion of my supper to pay much attention to aught else. It was just then that, forgetting where I was, and unmindful that I was not enjoying the regular fare of an inn, I called out, as if to the waiter, for "bread." A roar of laughter ran through the room at my mistake, when a dark-whiskered little fellow, in an undress frock, stuck his small sword into a loaf, and handed it to me from the table where he sat.

There was something in the act which rather puzzled me, and might have continued longer to do so, had not Pioche whispered me in a low voice, "Take it, take it."

I reached out my hand for the purpose, when, just as I had caught the loaf, with a slight motion of his wrist he disengaged the point of the weapon, and gave me a scratch on the back of my hand. The gesture I made called forth a renewed peal of laughing, and I now perceived, from the little man's triumphant look at his companions, that the whole thing was intended as an insult. Resolving, however, to go quietly in the matter, I held out my hand when it was still bleeding, and said, "You perceive, sir."

"Ah, an accident, *morbleu!*" said he, with a careless

shrug of his shoulders, and a half-leer of impertinent indifference.

"So is this also," replied I, as, springing up, I seized the sword he was returning to its scabbard, and smashed the blade across my knee.

"Well done, well done!" cried twenty voices in a breath, while the whole room rose in a confused manner to take one side or other in the contest, several crowding around the little man, whose voice had suddenly lost its tone of easy impertinence, and was now heard swearing away, with the most guttural intonation.

"What kind of swordsman are you?" whispered Pioche, in my ear.

"Sufficiently expert to care little for an enemy of his calibre."

"Ah, you don't know that," replied he; "it's François, the *maître d'armes* of the Fourth."

"You must not fight him, monsieur," said mademoiselle, as she laid her hand on mine, and looked up into my face with a most expressive glance.

"They are waiting for you without, mon lieutenant," said an old sergeant-major, touching his cap as he spoke.

"Come along," said Pioche, with a deeply-muttered oath; "and, by the blood of St. Louis, it shall be the last time Maître François shows his skill in fence, if I cost them the fire of a platoon to-morrow."

I was hurried along by the crowd to the court, a hundred different advisers whispering their various counsels in my ears as I went.

"Take care of his lunge in tierce—mind that," cried one.

"Push him outside the arm—outside, remember—take my advice, young man," said an old *sous-officier*: "close on him at once, take his point where he gives it, and make sure of your own weapon."

"No bad plan either," cried two or three. "Monsieur Auguste is right; François can't bear the cold steel—and if he sees it close, he loses his head altogether."

The courtyard was already cleared for action—the horses picketed in one corner, the straw removed, and a blaze of light from all the lamps and candles of the supper-room showed the ground as clearly as at noonday. While

my antagonist was taking off his coat and vest, an operation I did not choose to imitate, I took a rapid survey of the scene, and notwithstanding the rush of advisers around me, was sufficiently collected to decide on my mode of acting.

"Come, mon lieutenant, off with your frock," said an officer at my side; "even if you don't care for the advantage of a free sword-arm, those fellows yonder won't believe it all fair, if you do not strip."

"Yes, yes, take it off," said a fellow in the crowd, "your fine epaulettes may as well escape tarnishing; and that new coat, too, will be all the better without a hole in it."

I hastily threw off my coat and waistcoat, when the crowd fell back, and the *maître d'armes* advancing into the open space with a light and nimble step, cried out, "*En garde, monsieur.*" I stood my ground, and crossed my sword with his.

For a few seconds I contented myself with merely observing my adversary, who handled his weapon not only with all the skill of an accomplished swordsman, but with a dexterity that showed me he was playing off his art before his companions.

As if to measure his distance, he made two or three slight passes over the guard of my sword, and then grating his blade against mine with that peculiar motion which bodes attack, he fixed his eyes on mine, to draw off my attention from his intended thrust. The quickness and facility with which his weapon changed from side to side of mine, the easy motion of his wrist, and the rigid firmness of his arm, all showed me I was no match for him—although one of the best of my day at the military school—and I did not venture to proceed beyond mere defence. He saw this, and by many a trick endeavoured to induce an attack—now dropping his point carelessly, to address a monosyllable to a friend near—now throwing open his guard, as if from negligence. At length, as if tired with waiting, he called out,—

"*Que cela finisse,*" and rushed in on me.

The rapidity of the assault, for a second or so, completely overcame me; and though I defended myself mechanically, I could neither follow his weapon with my

eye, nor anticipate his intended thrust. Twice, his point touched my sword-arm above the wrist, and by a slight wound there, saved my lungs from being pierced. At last, after a desperate rally, in which he broke in on my guard, he made a fearful lunge at my chest; I bent forward, and received his blade in the muscles of my back, when, with a wheel round, I smashed the sword in me, and buried my own, up to the hilt, in his body. He fell, bathed in blood; and I, staggering backwards, was caught in Pioche's arms, at the moment when all consciousness was fast leaving me.

A few minutes after I came to myself, and found that I was lying on a heap of straw in the yard, while two regimental surgeons were most industriously engaged in trying to stop the hæmorrhage of my wounds.

With little interest in my own fate, I could not help feeling anxious about my antagonist. They shook their heads mournfully in reply to my question, and desired me to be as calm as possible, for my life hung on a very thread. The dressing completed, I was carried into the house, and laid on a bed in a small, neat-looking chamber, which I heard, as they carried me along, mademoiselle had kindly placed at my disposal. She herself assisted to place the pillow beneath my head, and then with noiseless gesture closed the curtains of the window, and took her seat at the bedside.

The moment the others had left the room, I turned to ask for the *maître d'armes*. But she could only say that his companions of the Fourth had carried him away to the ambulance, refusing all offers of aid, except from the surgeons of their own corps.

"They say," added she, with a *naïve* simplicity, "that François is not made like other folk, and that the only doctors who understand him are in the Fourth Regiment. However that may be, it will puzzle them sadly this time — you have given him his *coup de congé*."

"I hope not, sincerely," said I, with a shudder.

"And why not?" cried mademoiselle, in astonishment. "Is it not a good service you render to the whole brigade? Would not the division be all the happier if such as he, and Pichot, and the rest of them——"

"Pichot — Amédée Pichot?"

"Yes, Amédée Pichot, to be sure. But what's that knocking outside? Ah, there's Pioche at the window!"

Mademoiselle arose and walked towards the door, but, before she reached it, it was opened, and General d'Auvergne entered the room.

"Is he here?" asked he, in a low voice.

"Yes, general," said mademoiselle, with a curtsey, as she placed the chair for him to sit down. "He is much better—I'll wait outside till you want me," added she, as she left the room and closed the door.

"Come, come, my boy," said the kind old man, as he took my hand in his, "don't give way thus. I have made many inquiries about this affair, and they all tend to exculpate you. This fellow, François, is the *mauvaise tête* of the regiment, and I only wish his chastisement had come from some other hand than yours."

"Will he live, general?" asked I, with a smothering fulness in my throat as I uttered the words.

"Not if he be mortal, I believe. The sword pierced his chest from side to side."

I groaned heavily as I heard these words; and burying my head beneath the clothes, became absorbed in my grief. What would I not have endured then of insult and contumely, rather than suffer the terrible load upon my conscience of a fellow-creature's blood—shed in passion and revenge. How willingly would I have accepted the most despised position among men to be void of this crime.

"It matters not," cried I, in my despair—"it matters not how I guide my path, misfortunes beset me at every turn of the way——"

"Speak not thus," said the general, sternly. "The career you have embarked in is a stormy and a rough one. Other men have fared worse than you have in it—and without repining too. You knew of one such yourself, who, in all the saddest bereavements of his hopes, cherished a soldier's heart and a soldier's courage."

The allusion to my poor friend, Charles de Meudon, brought the tears to my eyes, and I felt that all my sufferings were little compared with his.

"Let your first care be to get well as soon as you can: happily your name may escape the Emperor's notice in

this affair, by appearing in the list of wounded—our friend the *maître d'armes* is not likely to discover on you. The campaign is begun, however, and you must try to take your share of it. The Emperor's staff starts for Munich to-morrow. I must accompany them—but I leave you in good hands here; and this detachment will occupy Elchingen at least ten days longer."

Scarcely had the general left me when mademoiselle re-entered the room.

"So, monsieur," said she, smiling archly, "you have been left in my care, it seems. *Morbleu!* it's well the vivandière of the regiment is not a prude, or I should scarcely know how to act. Well, well, one can only do one's best. And now, shall I read for you, or shall I leave you quiet for an hour or two?"

"Just so, leave him alone for a little while," said a gruff voice from the end of the bed, at the same time that the huge beard and red moustache of Pioche appeared peeping above the curtain.

"Is he not stupid, that great animal of a cuirassier?" said mademoiselle, starting at the voice so unexpectedly heard. "I say, *mon caporal*, right face—march. Do you hear, sir? You've got the *feuille de route*. What do you stay for?"

"Ah, mademoiselle," said the poor fellow, as he smoothed down his hair on his forehead, and looked the very impersonation of sheepish admiration.

"Well?" replied she, as if not understanding his appeal to her feelings—"well?"

A look of total embarrassment, an expression of complete bewilderment, was his only reply; while his eyes wandered round the room till they met mine, and then, as if suddenly conscious that a third party was present, he blushed deeply, and said,—

"Too true, *mon lieutenant*, she does with me what she will."

"Don't believe him, monsieur," interposed she, quickly. "I told him to get knocked on the head a dozen times, and he's never done so."

"I would though, and right soon too, if you were only in earnest," said he, with a vehemence that bespoke the truth of the assertion.

"There, there," said she, with a smile, as she held out her hand to him, "we are friends."

The poor fellow pressed it to his lips with the respectful devotion of a Bayard; and with a muttered "This evening," left the room.

"It is no small triumph, mademoiselle," said I, "that you have inspired such a passion in the hardy breast of the cuirassier."

A saucy shake of the head, as though she did not like the compliment, was the only reply. She bent her head down over her work, and seemed absorbed in its details; while I, reverting to my own cares, became silent also.

"And so, monsieur," said she, after a long pause—"and so you deem this conquest of mine a very wonderful thing?"

"You mistake me," said I, eagerly—"you mistake me much. My surprise was rather that one like Pioche, good-hearted, simple fellow as he is, should possess the refinement of feeling——"

"A clever flank movement of yours, lieutenant," interposed she, with a pleasant laugh; "and I'll not attack you again. And, after all, I *am* a little proud of my conquest."

"The confession is a flattering one, from one who doubtless has had a great many to boast of."

"A great many, indeed!" replied she, *naïvely*. "So many, that I can't reckon them—not to boast of, however, as you term it. *Parbleu!* some of them had little of *that*—— But here comes the doctor, and I must not let him see us talking. *Ma foi*, they little think, when their backs are turned, how seldom we mind their directions."

The surgeon's visit was a matter of a few seconds; he contented himself with feeling my pulse and reiterating his advice as to quiet.

"You have got the best nurse in the army, monsieur," said he, as he took his leave; "I have only one caution to give you—take care if an affection of the heart be not a worse affair than a thrust of a small sword. I have known such a termination of an illness before now."

Mademoiselle made no reply save an arch look of half anger, and left the room; and I, wearied and exhausted, sank into a heavy slumber.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE "VIVANDIERE OF THE FOURTH."

FOR three entire weeks my wound confined me to the limits of my chamber; and yet, were it not for my impatience to be up and stirring, my life was not devoid of happiness.

Every movement of the army, in its most minute detail, was daily reported to me by Mademoiselle Minette. The bulletins of the Emperor, the promotions, the *on dits* of the bivouac and the march, brought by the various battalions as they moved on towards the east, were all related by her, with such knowledge of military phrase and soldiers' style as to amuse me, equally by her manner as by what she told.

The cuirassiers marched soon after I received my wound, and, though attached to the corps, she remained behind at Elchingen, having pledged herself, as she said, to the general, to restore me safe and sound before she left me. The little window beside my bed offered a widely-extended view over the great plain beneath, and there I have sat the entire day, watching the columns of cavalry and infantry as they poured along, seemingly without ceasing, towards the Lower Danube. Sometimes the faint sounds of the soldiers' songs would reach me—the rude chorus of a regiment timing their step to some warrior's chant—and set my heart a beating to be with them once more. Sometimes my eye would rest upon the slow train of waggons, surmounted with a white flag, that wound their way heavily in the rear, and my spirit sank as I thought over the poor wounded fellows that were thus borne onward with the tide of war, as the crushed serpent trails his wounded folds behind him.

Mademoiselle seldom left me. Seated at her work, often for hours without speaking, she would follow the train of her own thoughts, and when by chance she gave

a passing glance through the window at the scene beneath, some single word would escape her, as to the regiments or their officers, few of which were unknown to her, at least by reputation.

I could not but mark that, within the last twelve or fourteen days, she seemed more sad and depressed than before—the lively gaiety of her character had given place to a meek and suffering melancholy, which I could not help attributing to the circumstances in which she was placed, away from all her ordinary pursuits, and the companions of her daily life. I hinted as much one day, and was about to insist on her leaving me, when she suddenly interrupted me, saying,—

"It is all true. I am sad, and know not why—for I never felt happier; yet, if you wished me to be gay, as I used to be, I could not for the world. It is not because I am far from those I have learned to look on as my brothers. Not so—my changeful fortune has often placed me thus. Perhaps it's your fault, *mon lieutenant*," said she, suddenly, turning her eyes full upon me.

"Mine, Minette—mine!" said I, in amazement.

She blushed deeply, and held down her head, while her bosom heaved several times convulsively; and then, while a deathly paleness spread over her cheek, she said, in a low, broken voice,—

"Perhaps it is because I am an orphan, and never knew what it was to have those whose dispositions I should imitate, and whose tastes I should study; but, somehow, I feel even as though I could not help becoming like those I am near to, following them—ay, and outstripping them—in all their likings and dislikings."

"And so, as you seem sad and sorrowful, it is more than probable that you took the colour of *my* thoughts. I should feel sorry, Minette, to think it were thus—I should ill repay all your kindness to me—I must try and wear a happier countenance."

"Do so—and mine will soon reflect it," said she, laughing; "but, perhaps, you have cause for sorrow," added she, as she stole a glance at me beneath her eyelashes.

"You know, Minette, that I am an orphan like yourself," said I, half evading the question.

"Ah!" cried she, passionately, "if I had been a man, I should like to be such a one as Murat there. See how his black eyes sparkle, and his proud lip curls, when the roll of artillery, or the clattering of a platoon is heard—how his whole soul is in the fight! I remember once—it was at the Iser—his brigade was stationed beneath the hill, and had no orders to move forward for several hours—he used to get off his horse, and walk about, and endeavour, by pushing the smoke away thus with his hand, and almost kneeling to the ground, to catch a view of the battle, and then he would spring into the saddle, and, for sheer passion, dash the spurs into his horse's flanks, till he reared and plunged again. I watched him thus for hours. I loved to look on him, chafing and fretting, like his own mettled charger, he was so handsome!

"'A drink, Minette! Something to cool my lips, for Heaven's sake,' said he, at last, as he saw me standing near him. I filled the little cup you see here with wine, and handed it to him. Scarcely had he raised it to his lips, when an aide-de-camp galloped up, and whispered some words in haste.

"'Ha, ha!' cried he, with a shout of joy, 'they want us, then—the squadrons will advance by sections—and charge!—charge!'—and with that he flung the goblet from him to the ground, and when I took it up, I found that with the grasp of his strong fingers he had crushed it nearly together. See here. I never would let it be changed. It is just as at the time he clasped it, and I kept it as a *souvenir* of the prince." She took from a little shelf the cup, as she spoke, and held it up before me, with the devoted admiration with which some worshipper would regard a holy relic. "And that," said Minette, as she pressed to her lips a faded cockade, whose time-worn tints still showed the tricolored emblems of the Republic—"that do I value above the cross of the Legion itself."

"Whose was it, Minette? Some brave soldier's, I'm sure."

"And you may be sure. That was the cockade of Le Premier Grenadier de la France—La Tour d'Auvergne—the cousin of your own general.' Seeing that I had not heard before of him, she paused for a few seconds in amazement, and then muttered—"A brave school to train

the youth of France it must be, where the name of La Tour d'Auvergne was never mentioned."

Having thus vented her indignation, she proceeded to tell me of her hero, who, though descended from one of the most distinguished families of France, yet persisted in carrying his musket in the ranks of the republican army—never attaining to a higher grade, nor known by any other title than the "Premier Grenadier de la France." Foremost in every post of danger—the volunteer at every emergency of more than ordinary peril—he refused every proffer of advancement, and lived among his comrades the simple life of a soldier.

"He fell at Neuburg," said Mademoiselle, "scarce a day's march from here; they buried him on the field, and placed him dead, as he had been ever while living, with his face towards the enemy. And you never heard of him?—*juste Ciel!* it is almost incredible. You never brigaded with the Forty-fifth of the line—that's certain."

"And why so?"

"Because they call his name at every parade muster as though he were still alive and well. The first man called is La Tour d'Auvergne, and the first soldier answers, '*Mort sur le champ de bataille.*' That's a prouder monument than your statues and tombstones. Is it not?"

"Indeed it is," said I, to whom the anecdote was then new, though I afterwards lived to hear it corroborated in every respect. With many such traits of the service did mademoiselle beguile the time—now telling of the pleasant life of the cantonment—now of the wild scenes of the battle-field. Young as she was, she had seen much of both, and learned around the bivouac fires the old traditions of the revolutionary armies, and the brave deeds of the first veterans of France. In such narratives, too, her own enthusiastic nature burst forth in all its vehemence—her eyes would sparkle, and her words come rapidly, as she described some fierce attack or headlong charge—and it was impossible to listen without catching up a portion of her ardour, so wrapt up did she herself become in the excitement of her story. Thus, one evening, while describing the passage of the Adige, after detailing most circumstantially the position and strength of the attacking columns, and describing how each successive advance was

repulsed by the murderous fire of the artillery, she proceeded to relate the plan of a flank movement, effected by some light infantry regiment, thrown across the river a considerable distance up the stream. "We came along," said she, "under the shade of some willows, and at last reached the ford—the leading companies halted, two officers sounded the river, and found that it was passable. I was close by at the time—it was the Colonel Lajolais who commanded the brigade, and he asked me for a 'goutte.' 'It may be the last you'll ever give me, Minette,' said he; 'I don't expect to see you again.'

"'Are you going to remain at this side, colonel?'" said I.

"'No, *parbleu!*'" said he, "not when the Twenty-second cross to the other.'

"'Neither am I, then,' said I; 'my place is with the head of the battalion.' Well, well, they all pressed me to stay back—they said a thousand kind things too—but that only decided me the more to go on—and as the signal-rocket was fired, the word was given, and on we went. For the first eight or ten paces it was mere wading—but suddenly a grenadier in the front called out, '*Gare!* lift your muskets, it's deep here;' and so it was—with one plunge down I went, but they seized me by the arms and carried me along, and some way or other we reached the bank. *Morbleu!* I felt half drowned—but there was little time to think over these things, for scarcely had the column formed, when the cry of 'Cavalry!' was given, and down came the lancers with a swoop; but we were all ready. The flank companies fell back, and formed in square, and a tremendous volley sent them off faster than they came. 'Now, then, push forward double quick,' said the old colonel—'the *pas de charge.*' Alas! the poor little drummer was lying dead at his feet. The thought suddenly seized me, I sprang forward, unstrung his drum, threw the strap over my shoulder, and beat the '*pas de charge,*'—a cheer ran along the whole battalion, and on we went. *Mort de ciel!* I was never so near the fire before. There was the enemy, scarce two hundred yards off—two great columns, with artillery between, waiting for us. 'Keep her back—keep back, Minette—*brave fille.*' I heard no more—a shot came whizzing past, and struck

me here." She pulled down her dress as she spoke, and disclosed the scar of a bullet's track on her white shoulder; then, as if suddenly recollecting, she blushed deeply, drew her kerchief closely around her, and muttered in a low voice, "*Ma foi*, how these things make one forget to be a woman." And with that she hung down her head, and despite all I could say would not utter another word.

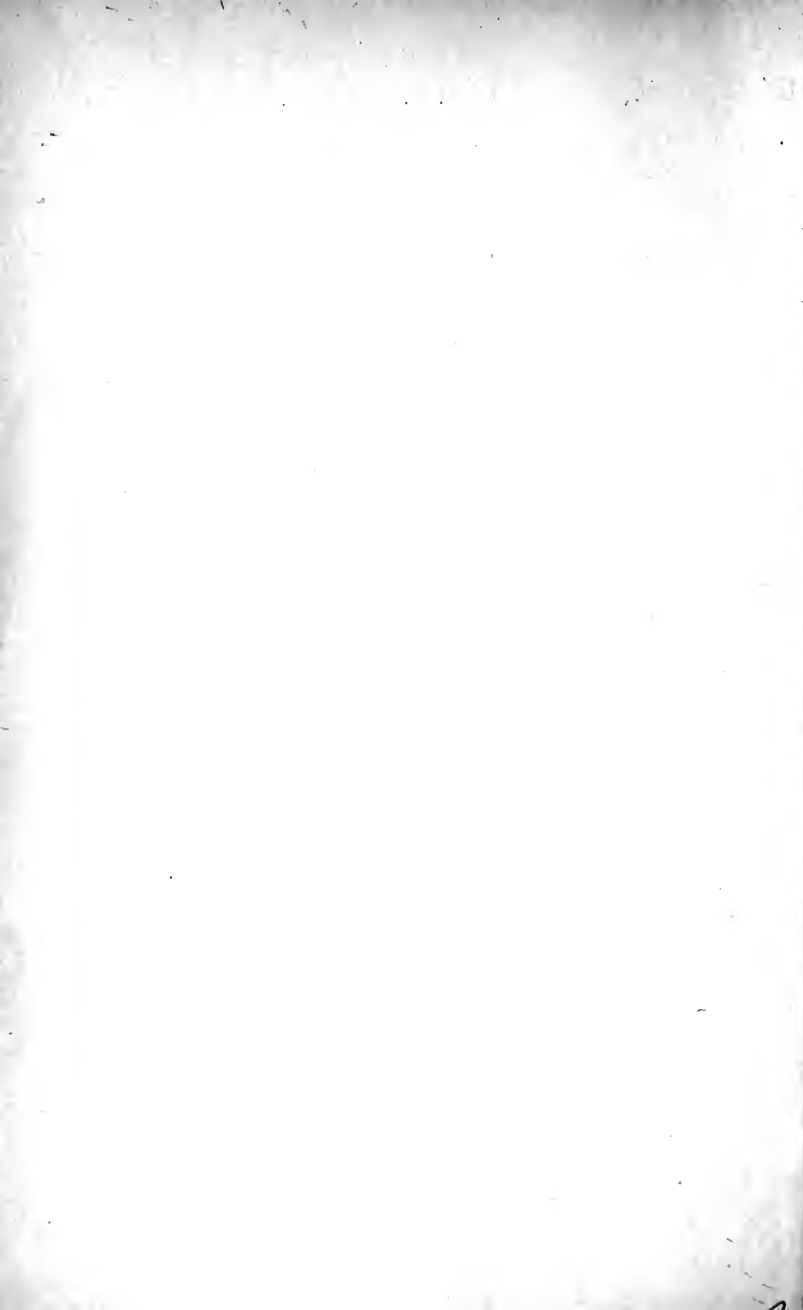
Such was the *vivandière* of the Fourth; blending in her character the woman's weakness and the soldier's ardour—the delicacy of feeling, which not even the life of camps and bivouacs could eradicate, with the wild enthusiasm for glory—the passion of her nation. It needed not her dark eyes, shaded with their long black fringe—her oval face, whose freckles but displayed the transparent skin beneath—her graceful figure, and her elastic step, to make her an object of attraction in the regiment; nor could I be surprised to learn, as I did, how many a high offer of marriage had been made to her by those soldiers of fortune whose gallantry and daring had won them honours in the service.

To value at their real price such attractions, one should meet them far away, and remote from the ordinary habits of the world, in the wild, reckless career of the camp—on the long march—beside the weary watch-fire—ay, on the very field of battle—amid the din, the clamour, and the smoke—the cheers, the cries of carnage: then, indeed, such an apparition had something magical in it. To see that tender girl tripping along fearlessly from rank to rank, as though she had a charmed life—now saluting with her hand some brave soldier as he rode by to the charge—now stooping beside the wounded, and holding to his bloodless lips the longed-for cup: to watch her as she rode gracefully at the head of the regiment, or lay beside the fire of the bivouac, relating with a woman's grace some story of the campaign—while the grey-bearded veteran and the raw youth hung on each word, and wondered how the scenes in which they mingled and acted could bear such interest when told by rosy lips. Who would wonder if she had many lovers? who would not rather be surprised at those who remained coldly indifferent to such charms as hers?

Let my confession, then, excite neither astonishment nor suspicion, when I acknowledge that, in such companion-

ship, the days slipped rapidly over. I never wearied of hearing her tell of the scenes she had witnessed, nor did she of recounting them; and, although a sense of reproach used now and then to cross me for the life of inactivity and indolence I was leading, Mademoiselle Minette promised me many a brave opportunity of distinction to come, and campaigns of as great glory as even those of Italy and Egypt.

END OF VOL. I.







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